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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

APRIL 1904.

*Nature's Comedian.*¹

BY W. E. NORRIS.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TOP OF THE HILL.

DICK DUNVILLE, who had cravenly slunk off to bed, without saying good-night to his sister, after their return to their hotel, had to meet her alone at breakfast on the following morning, and he brought a somewhat hangdog visage to the encounter.

'I don't know what you think of me,' he diffidently began.

'I don't quite know myself,' Anne made brisk reply. 'Would it be going too far, I wonder, to say that I think you a genius? After all, that is pretty much what the newspapers say of you. At least, they say it of Harold, behind whom you are pleased to shelter yourself.'

'You don't mean to tell me that they call *Renunciation* a work of genius!'

'They have said something of the sort before now upon less provocation, I believe. They are enthusiastically flattering, at any rate—read for yourself!'

She tossed a handful of papers across the table to him, and went on: 'But if you ask me what I think of you and Harold from a moral point of view, I don't see why I should pay either of you compliments. If he has practised a fraud upon the public,

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you have deceived your nearest relatives, although you have taken outsiders pretty freely into your confidence, it appears. There really doesn't seem to be a pin to choose between you.'

'I was afraid your opinion would be that a parson might be better employed than in writing plays,' Dick pleaded. 'And a very sound opinion to hold too.'

'A very silly opinion, I should call it, to express about you, whom nobody on earth can accuse of neglecting your duties. Why not confess that you were afraid of my throwing cold water upon you?—a thing I should most probably have done, in my ignorance. Or was it perhaps that your amazing misplaced unselfishness prompted you to force fresh honours upon Harold?'

'Of course not! How could I tell that I wasn't forcing disaster upon him? The truth is that if anybody has been unselfish, as well as most serviceable, in this matter, it is he; and that makes me regret all the more what occurred at supper last night. It really was too bad of her!'

'It really was,' Anne drily agreed, 'and I hope she realises by this time the folly of interfering between a donkey and a precipice. Not that you are over the precipice; only of course you would be if you had your deserts. Well, well! I, at all events, am not going to interfere and be scolded for my pains. Harold is to be allowed to go on reaping where he has not sown, I presume.'

'That depends entirely upon what you mean by reaping. He is to pay me a very handsome—only too handsome, I am afraid—share of his takings, and, at the risk of incurring your contempt, I must own that I wrote the play simply as a pecuniary speculation.'

'I don't believe it,' said Anne.

'Well, then, my motives were mixed; though I did most particularly want to make a little money, if I could. I certainly didn't want to see my name, with its reverend prefix, upon posters. For all that, I am not above being gratified by favourable reviews. What have the critics got to say about us?'

What, when summarised, they had to say was that *Renunciation* proved Mr. Harold Dunville to be something much more uncommon than a talented actor. His play, according to the critics of the daily papers, was one which demanded to be taken seriously, and which, despite some imperfections, could not be regarded as a mere ephemeral contribution to dramatic literature. The remarkable success which had attended its initial representation might or might not be sustained; but it was assured, in any

case, by its pathos, its brilliant dialogue, and its well-contrived situations, of a permanent place amongst the very few works of its class which had been attempted of late years. The critics, in short, had evidently been taken by surprise, and some of them gave a free rein to their admiration, while others, more guarded, allowed it to be inferred that they were only waiting for the deliberate sanction of the public to express themselves in warmer language. Where they were at one, and where they doubtless felt upon safe ground, was in their praise of Harold's acting. This they pronounced to have been a veritable *tour de force*, and they declared—what indeed was the fact—that only he could have played the part he had assigned to himself with the mingled fire and restraint and humour which were essential to its interpretation.

'Author or no author,' Dick remarked, as he laid down the journals with a satisfied sigh, 'Harold scores all along the line.'

'And that is what you wanted, is it?' his sister returned. 'Well, I must say for you, Dick, that, author or no author, genius or no genius, you are—'

But he was denied the privilege of hearing what, in Anne's judgment, he was by the entrance of Miss Lilian Ormond, who walked into the room at this moment, with her chin rather more in the air than usual and with an expression of countenance which seemed designed to discourage familiarity. Miss Ormond was very polite and amiable, if a trifle distant. She said she wished to apologise for her extremely silly behaviour of the preceding evening. She quite saw now that there was much to be said for the arrangement which had been entered into between the two brothers, and she was very sorry that she had caused annoyance to them both by her meddlesome announcement. She hoped, however, that no great harm had been done, and she promised not to offend in the same way a second time. She also, it appeared, had been looking at the papers, and was delighted (or asserted that she was) by what she had read in them. Finally, she wanted to know whether her kind entertainers would be returning home by the twelve o'clock train or not. Because she was afraid she must not delay her own departure beyond that hour.

'But you are never going to desert us to-day!' Dick expostulated. 'We meant all along to see the piece through three nights; for everybody says that the first is nothing to go by. Don't you feel that you could stand another brace of representations?'

Lilian regretted so much that she must turn a deaf ear to the voice of the charmer. Unfortunately, she was wanted at home, and, much as she would have liked to see *Renunciation* a second and third time, she could not treat herself to that luxury. She was sure, for the rest, that there was no doubt at all about its having made a great hit. Her resolution was not to be shaken ; nor, as Dick noticed, did Anne make much of an effort to shake it. When she had finished her breakfast—which did not take long—and had left the room, upon the plea of having to pack up, the Rector said rather reproachfully to his sister :

‘ You might have given me a little help. I am afraid she is offended at what I said last night.’

‘ I shouldn’t wonder if she was,’ returned Anne coolly ; ‘ but that won’t do either her or you any harm. As for help, I should be charmed to give it you if you needed any ; but you don’t. Thank Heaven, all you have to do now is to go in and win ; for you can’t, surely, be so dense as to mistake the meaning of her attack upon Harold ! Nevertheless, it is just as well that she should be allowed a little time to recover her temper after your ungrateful jobation.’

‘ My dear Anne,’ exclaimed Dick, flushing slightly, ‘ you don’t in the least understand what you are talking about ! If you had seen as much of women as I have——’

‘ I happen to be a woman myself,’ interjected Anne demurely.

‘ Yes, yes, I know ; but for that very reason you see what you wish to see, instead of unwelcome truths. I was going to say that what you call her attack upon Harold is the proof that she cares for him. If she hadn’t cared, she wouldn’t have been angry. The feeling that she has for me is a perfectly natural and rational one, which she has never concealed—the outcome of our long friendship, our respective ages and mutual relations. I believe she is attached to me, and very glad I am that she is ; but I am not to assume that because I am a lunatic she is another. For my own part, I can truly say that my one wish——’

‘ Oh, don’t trouble yourself to formulate your one highly creditable wish,’ interrupted Anne, laughing, ‘ you wish, of course, for her happiness. Well, it rests with you to make her happy ; it certainly doesn’t rest with Harold. All the same, she had better go home in a huff ; for I don’t deny that if you were to propose to her this morning she would probably be enough of a goose to refuse you.’

It may be laid down as a general principle that people in love

are always more or less of geese, and if Harold Dunville, during the course of his amorous career, had ever been really in love, he was so with Lilian Ormond. No doubt that was why the news of her abrupt departure dismayed him less than it would have done had he been able to believe in anything so antecedently improbable as her having lost her heart to his elder brother. What he did believe—and had good reason for believing—was that he himself had possessed her heart not long ago; that he had estranged her by his rather cynical courtship of Miss Gardiner; that she was displeased with him, that she had tried to humiliate him, and that her failure to do so accounted for her turning her back upon him in the hour of his triumph. Really he could neither blame her nor wonder at her for that; yet he in no wise despaired. Better days, he hoped, were at hand—a day when it would be in his power to approach her once more with frank avowals, with entreaties for pardon, with assurances of a fidelity which, when all was said, had survived trial, and—last, not least—with a comfortable balance at his bankers.

Meanwhile, he continued to play his part, on and off the stage, brilliantly and exultantly. Harold Dunville had at this time reached the zenith of his fame and prosperity; the piece at a bound carried public favour by storm; every place in the theatre was booked weeks in advance; personages highly situated in the social, political, and literary world wrote him letters with their own distinguished hands which are still extant to show with what strange facility a handsome and fairly talented man may fascinate his fellow-mortals; he enjoyed it all to the full, basking, as his habit was, in the present, with little thought or care for the future. With Lorna Fitzwalter he was charming—it was so important to conciliate her, and honeyed words came so readily to his lips!—to his brother and sister, so long as they remained in London, he demeaned himself after a fashion which quite contented them both; in the presence of the many flatterers and admirers by whom he was surrounded he displayed a very pretty and good-humoured modesty. He did not mistake himself for a genius (being preserved from such absurd misconceptions by the common sense which was a constituent in his piebald character); but he knew that, whether deservedly or not, he was one of the conspicuous, powerful personalities of the passing hour, and the knowledge pleased him. Whom would it not have pleased? Thus the opening weeks of the year were weeks of sheer glory and joy to him; weeks when he saw his reputation ever increasing, when his

private popularity beckoned him to giddy heights, and when the money came tumbling in. He posted cheque after cheque to Dick down in the country, never doubting but that in so doing he was discharging all due obligations to a collaborator ; he had not a great deal of time to devote to dreams of Lilian, though he did sometimes dream of her ; and as for Josephine Gardiner, it may be said that, so far as he was concerned, she paid the proverbial penalty of absence.

However, there came in the month of March a certain evening on which it pleased Miss Gardiner to deliver herself from that disadvantage. From beyond the footlights he recognised her fair hair and dark brows in a box in the first tier, and, at the sight of her, dormant ambitions woke anew in him. Why was she in London ? It is not usual to return from the south of France at a date when our insular cold season is at its very worst, and he could not but remember that vision of his when, smarting a little under a defeat and a snub, he had pictured Miss Gardiner attracted homewards against her will by rumours of his achievements. Well, she should, at all events, see what he could do ! He acted that night with all the strength and skill he had in him, which is saying a good deal, and it may have been the reward of his efforts that a card was afterwards brought to him in his dressing-room on which was scribbled in pencil, below Miss Gardiner's name, ' Quite splendid ! Congratulate you immensely. Do come and look me up in Grosvenor Place some afternoon at five o'clock.'

Of course a hansom deposited him at the door of Sir Joseph Gardiner's London residence on the ensuing afternoon, a lurking suspicion that it might have been wiser, as well as more dignified, on his part to disregard Miss Josephine's summons adding some zest to the alacrity and curiosity with which he obeyed it. What she wanted of him he knew as little as he knew what he wanted of her ; but he scented dramatic elements in the coming interview, and it would have been foreign to his whole nature to forego such a prospect.

' Very glad to see you,' said Lady Gardiner, into whose presence he was shown. ' Excuse me for not getting up ; if I were to disturb Chatterbox, we shouldn't be able to hear ourselves speak for the next five minutes. Josephine told me to say, in case you should call, that she has been obliged to go out ; but she hopes you will dine with us on Sunday if you are disengaged. Sunday, it seems, suits actors, as well as members of Parliament.'

' You are very kind,' answered Harold. ' Naturally, that is my only evening off duty in the week, and I have no engagement for next Sunday, as it happens.' He thought it only due to himself to add that all his time was fully occupied and that Miss Gardiner had given him to understand that she would be at home on any afternoon at five o'clock.

' I accept no responsibility for Josephine or for her statements,' returned the old lady, laughing placidly; ' from what I hear, she seldom keeps an appointment, unless it is important, and not always then. She tells me that *you* have once more become important, though. Haven't you written a play or something? Anyhow, I gathered from what she said this morning that you are being talked about, and, as you know, she delights in people who are talked about.'

Considering that all London was just then talking about *Renunciation*, Lady Gardiner's evidently honest ignorance and indifference seemed to border upon the sublime. Harold surveyed the old woman's fat, good-humoured countenance and twinkling eyes, as she reclined in her low chair, with a couple of dogs upon her knees, and, acquitting her of any mocking intention, was more amused than affronted.

' I should despair,' he remarked, ' of interesting you in my humble bids for fame or notoriety; but I have the vanity to hope that I must have interested Miss Gardiner, since she thought it worth while to send me a congratulatory message after last night's performance.'

Lady Gardiner nodded. ' Oh, she's interested; she's tremendously keen upon taking you up again, I fancy, which is rather unusual with her. As a general thing, she doesn't pick up what she has once dropped, and there, I must say, I am disposed to be of her mind. Attempts which don't come off are best not resumed. At one time I went in for rearing turkey-chicks; but it was such a worrying, disappointing business that I abandoned it, and though I am always being bothered to make a fresh start, I won't. I've tried it, you see, and I know just what the difficulties are.'

' I daresay they are very great,' answered Harold; ' but you have fallen back upon some substitute, I suppose. Perhaps Miss Gardiner is of opinion that a dramatist is a substitute for a Parliamentary candidate. He isn't the same person, at all events.'

' Well, he may be or he may not. In your case, I should have

thought that he was—in another setting, to be sure, if that were likely to affect results. Have a cup of tea ?'

Harold accepted. He had a notion that Lady Gardiner was not unamiably inclined towards him, that she wished to put him on his guard against renewing an unsuccessful enterprise, and that she could, if she chose, give him information about her daughter which might be of service to him. But, although her candid remarks during the next quarter of an hour confirmed this impression, she did not tell him much. What Lady Gardiner disliked more than anything else in the world was trouble, and experience had taught her that interference with Miss Josephine's proceedings was apt to bring about trouble.

'I hope you are making a lot of money ?' she remarked incidentally and interrogatively.

'Yes, a lot, thank you,' he replied, smiling.

'That's all right. I have always found ready money a huge consolation myself, and I believe everybody else does. Work also isn't a bad thing for those who are not afflicted with corpulence. But I doubt whether there is much comfort to be got out of fantastic and extravagant experiments.'

'Do you suspect me of embarking upon any ?' Harold inquired.

'Oh, I know so little about you ! I was thinking, when I spoke, of Josephine, who is nothing if not fantastic and empirical. Preserved from catastrophes, though, by a very clear vision of the side on which her bread is buttered. We are to have the pleasure of seeing you on Sunday, then ? Sorry I can't have the pleasure of seeing your play, but theatres suffocate me.'

Harold, as he left the house, said to himself, 'I'll be hanged if she shall treat me like that !' But in what way he wished to be treated by Miss Gardiner he might have found it difficult to specify.

CHAPTER XX.

JOSEPHINE REPLIES ON THE WHOLE CASE.

SIR JOSEPH GARDINER had a prejudice, dating from the far-away period of his youth and Puritanical education, against Sunday dinner-parties ; but this did not prevent him from entertaining a large circle on the first evening of every week during the Parlia-

mentary session. Being something of a philosopher, he had long ago recognised the fact that prejudices are a luxury denied to husbands and fathers, and although he never knew who was going to dine under his roof on a given day—sometimes did not know even when their names were mentioned to him—he refrained from letting his guests see how greatly he would have preferred their room to their company. From time to time, too, these banquets were rendered less wearisome for him by the unexpected discovery of a kindred spirit amongst the assemblage. Harold Dunville, whom he had never fancied, could scarcely be described as a kindred spirit; yet the sight of him on that spring evening was so unexpected that Sir Joseph, entering the drawingroom, as usual, at the last moment and blinking short-sightedly right and left, was moved to a species of cordiality.

'Dear me! Mr. Dunville, is that you? I thought you had quite forsaken us. We have not met, I believe, since—since we came to grief together at the election. Well, sir, I don't know that you lose much by being excluded from the present House of Commons. The old giants of debate are all dead, and we don't seem to get any promising recruits. By the way, isn't that your successful opponent over there? I wonder who—ah, my daughter, no doubt! She delights in asking people to meet who perhaps would not have chosen to meet if they had been consulted beforehand. I daresay it was she who asked you.'

Harold, who had but just arrived, had already recognised and been greeted by Captain Desborough, with whom Josephine was engaged in conversation. From Josephine he had met with a friendly, if somewhat pre-occupied, reception, and he had been made to feel that he was not (as he had secretly expected to be) the guest of the evening. He was, in fact, one of sixteen guests, all, with the solitary exception of Desborough, distinguished either by birth or by career; and if he was, for the moment, rather more of a celebrity than any of them, Miss Gardiner did not appear to have realised the circumstance. Her neglect piqued him a little, although he had wit enough to perceive the unintentional compliment which it implied. She would hardly have omitted to welcome him with verbal compliments unless she had wished him to understand that he must not take too much for granted. He took, truth to tell, a good deal for granted; it would have been almost impossible for mortal man with experiences such as his had been to help doing so, and he was in no hurry. She would give him his chance later in the evening, he knew; these pre-

liminary tactics of hers only whetted his determination to take advantage of it.

His chance did not come at the dinner-table, where he was placed as far as possible from her, between the loquacious young wife of a Cabinet Minister and a grim-visaged old woman, related to Lady Gardiner, whose name he did not catch. The Cabinet Minister's wife told him that she had long been dying to make his acquaintance and chattered to him about his professional fascinations in a style which caused him to wish that she had died before attaining her object; his left-hand neighbour gruffly informed him that, although not much of a playgoer, she had been to see *Renunciation*, and was unable to understand why such a fuss had been made about the piece.

'Not a bit true to life,' said she; 'people who have a good title to a large property don't throw it away to please a jilt. That sort of thing doesn't happen.'

'Perhaps not—only it did happen,' Harold observed. 'The episode is historically accurate, I believe, and those concerned in it were members of my own family.'

'Oh, indeed!' snorted the old lady. 'Then all I can say is that your ancestor richly deserved to lose all he lost, including his life. *Renunciation* has a noble sound, but it is really a mere synonym for idiocy. You may take my word for it, Mr. Dunville, that material advantage is the one thing worth securing in this dirty little world and the only thing that wise men try to secure. The romantic persons who pretend to be above caring for it go to the wall—and serve them right!'

Harold laughed at this exaggerated cynicism, yet felt, as he sometimes did, that material advantages were not wholly to be despised. Dunville Manor, for instance?—and a wife who, even though he might not be enamoured of her, would always be an agreeable, brilliant, stimulating companion? If he was to go in for the luxury of renunciation, let him at least have the satisfaction of exercising it. Miss Gardiner had so much the air of challenging him that he could do no less than take up her challenge.

He watched her during dinner, and perceived that she had her eye pretty constantly upon him, despite the unbroken dialogue which she kept up with Captain Desborough, who was seated by her side. Furthermore, he perceived that that gentleman had fallen an open and avowed victim to her charms. Poor, honest, breezy, nautical Desborough! It was not by the likes of him that

Harold was in any danger of being rendered jealous, nor was there much fear of his enchantress being serious. A skilled comedian is quick to detect comedy, and the key to Josephine's behaviour was one of a very ordinary pattern. Nevertheless, it did not follow that she was serious with regard to the man to whom her acting was addressed. Lorna Fitzwalter, who was in some respects shrewd, had unhesitatingly pronounced that she was not. Upon the whole, he was curious, a little excited, ready to go considerable lengths—resolved, in any case, that she should not elude him after dinner.

She made no attempt to do so. On the contrary, he had no sooner entered the drawingroom with the other men than she imperatively beckoned him aside and began :

‘Now tell me all about it, please. When was that play written?’

Harold shrugged his shoulders. ‘I am afraid I can’t answer the question. It was made possible as a play last autumn, after I had so conclusively proved to you that I was impossible as a politician. One likes to prove that one is something, you see.’

‘Ah! that’s just what I wanted to know. Well, you have certainly proved yourself to be something and somebody. It is far and away the finest English play that has been produced in our time.’

‘I am very glad you think so.’

‘Of course I think so; everybody thinks so. But you puzzle me. If you had it in your power to do such work, why on earth didn’t you do it before?’

‘Doesn’t it occur to you that the incentive may have been lacking before?’ asked Harold.

She broke into a laugh. ‘That would be such a pretty speech if it were but sincere! But, whether it is sincere or not—and for several reasons I don’t quite believe it is—you make me feel that I failed to take your measure last autumn. Perhaps that is just what you wanted me to feel.’

His eyes met hers. ‘Oh, there are several things that I should like to make you feel,’ he declared.

‘I suppose there are,’ she returned reflectively and composedly. And then, ‘I don’t altogether trust you, somehow.’

‘If it comes to that, Miss Gardiner, I don’t altogether trust you. It would be rather odd if I did, don’t you think so?’

She appeared to give this question impartial consideration

before she rejoined, with a smile, 'Well, you shouldn't have been so horridly disappointing! I had set my heart upon getting you into Parliament, and, although I believe I threatened to abjure politics, I still have to own that, as a stepping-stone, nothing quite takes the place of the House of Commons.'

'Is that why you have taken my late rival under your patronage? He is hovering about anxiously in the offing, I see, and evidently awaits a signal from you to join company.'

'He won't get it; you are much too interesting to be interrupted. Yes, I have taken him under my patronage, because he also is interesting in his way. Oh, not talented, as you are, of course; still by no means a fool and provided with plenty of energy and common sense. There is no reason why he shouldn't go far, with his seat as a stepping-stone and some unobtrusive patronage—mine, if you like—to give him a hoist when it is needed. Look at Mr. Brereton, whose wife you took in to dinner. A commonplace, everyday man, if ever there was one; yet there he is on the Treasury bench.'

'But not through his wife's exertions, surely!'

'Oh, I don't know. She is rather a goose; but she is pretty and she knows lots of influential people. However that may be, what I mean is that Captain Desborough has, or may have, a career before him. Is there any career before you, I wonder?'

The query sounded so frank that he did not hesitate to reply in the same spirit, 'That depends upon what you call a career and upon what you think my aspirations ought to be. There was a time when you would have it that what I must necessarily aspire to was the reinstatement of my family in the old home.'

'And don't you care about that?'

'I care a great deal about it,' Harold answered boldly; 'only there is something else which I care about far more. If the one happens to imply the other, as perhaps it does, I can't help that.'

She took no more notice of this plain declaration than as if it had never been uttered. 'Careers,' she remarked pensively, 'are various; much may be made out of a man of letters; though, as I have often told you, I don't see how anything is to be made out of an actor, except an actor. I may be wrong, but you strike me as being rather disquietingly wedded to the stage.'

'At a word from you, a divorce shall be obtained,' said Harold.

'Do you really mean what you say? Your meaning it would make you quite fascinatingly interesting, you know.'

'Well, there was a time when you seemed to find me so.'

'There was,' she confessed, without hesitation; 'but I am not sure that you ever found me so.'

He was sufficiently adroit to leave her in doubt. 'I couldn't manage to get up any thrilling interest in the election,' he admitted.

'Nor could I, except as a means towards an end. The question is whether the end is to be secured by other means or not.'

'If you can't answer that question, I don't know who can,' was Harold's rejoinder; and as he made it, he looked at her with those soft, smiling eyes of his which so few women had ever been able to resist. Miss Gardiner's senses were visibly troubled for an instant, but only for an instant.

'I must say for you that you are an excellent actor,' she calmly observed, after a brief pause, 'and you certainly pay me a high compliment when you offer to give up being an actor. I'm glad to have seen you in *Renunciation*, and I'm glad to have seen the piece, which was well worth seeing. It so often happens that one comes in for a treat like that by mere chance, doesn't it?'

'Was it mere chance, then, that brought you back from the Riviera in such haste?' Harold had the temerity to ask.

'Oh no, that wasn't chance. The fact is that I returned because I wanted to hear Captain Desborough make his maiden speech. A capital speech!—did you read it? The House always enjoys hearing naval men talk about naval matters, and what he had to say was said just in the right style. Quite clear and convincing and colloquial, with a joke or two, which made his hearers laugh because they made him laugh, thrown in to enliven the dry passages. Oh, as I tell you, there's no reason why he shouldn't go a long way.'

If her design was to provoke Harold's jealousy it failed, for he knew well enough that her return to England could not have been brought about by Captain Desborough's casual and doubtless unpremeditated contribution to a recent debate. Nevertheless, he was a little annoyed when, without giving him time to reply, she made that signal to the gallant Captain for which the latter had been patiently keeping his weather eye open during the last ten minutes or so.

'Would you believe,' she smilingly asked, as Desborough

drew near, 'that Mr. Dunville has been proclaiming his readiness to throw up the stage only because, in my humble judgment, he is thrown away upon it ?'

'Oh, well, I should believe in anybody's doing anything that you asked him to do, Miss Gardiner,' was the prompt reply which she received. 'All the same, I shall be awfully sorry, and so will everybody else be, if our friend Mr. Dunville takes you at your word. I suppose you must have persuaded him that he can do as well elsewhere as upon the stage ; but he can't do better, you know, because that would be impossible. Such a lot of my time has been put in abroad that the first opportunity I've had of admiring him came a few nights ago, when I went to see *Renunciation*, and I must say I never enjoyed myself more in my life. I'm no critic, of course ; but, by Jove, Dunville, it strikes me that you're hard to beat !'

'Thank you,' answered Harold, laughing ; 'that is a handsome tribute, coming from a man who beat me pretty soundly the only time when I tried to measure my strength against his.'

'My dear fellow,' returned the other, 'that was simply because I happened to hold the winning cards, and because it takes a good deal to get dissatisfied Tories to vote Radical. If it had been a question of measuring your brains against mine, I should have been nowhere ; but they didn't expect fine language from me, and didn't get it. Besides, the fact is that I'm a lucky man—always have been. Somehow or other, I seem to get what I try for almost as a matter of course.'

This announcement was made with a confidential simplicity and geniality which went far towards explaining the phenomenon to which it referred. Harold surveyed the big, broad-shouldered, sunburnt sailor, and felt, with a quick pang of envy, that he was looking at a man big in every sense.

'One difference between us,' he mused, 'is that I am not big, and I suspect that one reason for his getting what he wants is that he always knows what he wants, whereas I never do. Not, at all events, until I have got whatever it may be, when I pretty generally become quite sure that I didn't want it. Lucky !—I should rather think he was lucky to be built on such lines ! Why, the beggar is over head and ears in love with Miss Josephine ; yet he isn't a bit enraged with me for having monopolised her all this time ! He doesn't pay me the compliment of being alarmed or dismayed for one moment, confound

him ! It's ridiculous, perhaps ; but it's by men of his sort that battles are won.'

The above reflections and others of a kindred nature were made while Miss Gardiner and Desborough were keeping up a lively interchange of ideas. From time to time he was appealed to by one or other of them, and he took an occasional part in a conversation from which neither of them appeared anxious to exclude him. It could not be said that they were making love or even flirting ; only something in their evident mutual comprehension and good-fellowship warned Harold that Desborough might not, after all, be the negligible rival he had at first supposed. Thus at length he was put upon his mettle and forgot all the excellent reasons that he had for being indifferent as to Josephine's destiny. It was clear that she did not intend to give him sole possession of her ear again that evening ; but when, on bidding her good-night, he asked her, in so many words and in a resolute voice, to name some day on which he might see her alone, she replied at once :

'Five o'clock on Tuesday, if that will do you. Ask for me, and you will be shown into my sanctum, which no unauthorised person ever dares to invade.'

Well might Harold say of himself that he never knew what he wanted. He knew what he did not want ; he knew that he hated to be thrown over by any woman ; he knew that the idea of being cut out of the succession to Dunville Manor by Captain Desborough (of all people in the world !) was extremely distasteful to him. But whether he really wanted to win the prize for which he had virtually proclaimed himself a candidate or not was another question. It was, however, certain now that nothing short of failure to keep his appointment could dispense him from the obligation of making Miss Josephine Gardiner a formal offer of marriage. It may be conjectured that what would have entirely satisfied his soul would have been to receive an offer of marriage from her and, with deep emotion, deep gratitude and regret—to decline it. But as even Miss Gardiner was not sufficiently emancipated from the thraldom of social tradition to take a step so unusual as that, the ensuing two and forty hours brought some moments of anxiety and misgiving to her destined suitor.

Nevertheless, he presented himself on the Tuesday afternoon with a fairly serene countenance—relying, indeed, a good deal upon his star. If Desborough was a lucky man, so, after another fashion, was he ; he had been in, and had got out of, many a tight

place in years gone by ; it had never been his way to take much heed for the morrow, and he had generally found himself on his feet after no matter what shock or adventure. No sooner had he been admitted into Miss Gardiner's private room, which was in many respects the counterpart of that assigned to her use at Dunville Manor, than he advanced straight to the assault.

' I have come,' he announced, ' to beg for an answer to the question which, as I told you the other day, you alone can answer. Am I to abandon the stage or not ? '

' I don't think,' Josephine smilingly observed, ' that that was exactly the question which I left unanswered, was it ? Didn't it refer to a certain end and to the possibility of arriving at that end by some other means than by a seat in Parliament ? '

' Yes, I believe so. It's the same thing, you know.'

' For all practical purposes, I suppose it is,' she meditatively agreed ; ' only perhaps it would save time if you were to put another question to me which I presume that you intend to put. Then I should be able to reply on the whole case, you see.'

He did not altogether like her manner, which was perceptibly ironical ; but he at once complied with her invitation, and he was for the moment so thoroughly sincere in desiring to win the game upon which he was engaged that a very pretty flow of eloquence rose to his lips. A good deal of what he protested was quite true. Not, to be sure, the whole of it ; but certain assurances must, after all, necessarily accompany any offer of marriage, and upon these he did not dwell with more warmth than was unavoidable, for he felt instinctively that Josephine was to be attracted rather by a brilliant than by an ardent wooer. She listened to him with apparent pleasure, nodding her head from time to time, and when he had made an end, she said :

' Now I am going to be perfectly honest with you. I have always rather prided myself upon not being a romantic person, and if you had won that election and had asked me to marry you immediately after it, I believe I should have accepted you. For, although we don't love one another in any romantic sense, you and I—no, you are not to interrupt, please ; it is my turn to speak—although we are not romantically attached, we might have made a happy enough couple, as couples go. Well, you lost the election ; but then you came out as the writer of a play which has had an extraordinary, and I must own a well-deserved success ; so that seemed to open up fresh horizons. You see, Mr. Dunville, I really do like you very much, even if, as I told you on Sunday

evening, I don't implicitly trust you. On Sunday evening you had a distinct chance; but—Sunday was followed by Monday.'

'It always is. You mean, I suppose, that on Monday you began to have doubts?'

'No, I mean that Monday brought me certainty. Walking across the Park yesterday, whom should I meet but our friend Miss Fitzwalter—thrown in my path, I must assume, by a kindly and watchful Providence. Of course I stopped her; of course we discussed you and *Renunciation*, and I am sure she did not know what a portentous disclosure she was making when she let out the circumstance that the play was, after all, not written by you, but by your brother. I don't think I ever was more amazed in my life. Not at its turning out that you were not the author, it had seemed to me all along so amazing that you should be, but at the revelation which it gave me of your brother's capacities. Who would ever have believed that a country parson knew as much as that! I must certainly cultivate him when we go down to Dunville again. We are not concerned with your brother just now, though, are we? I wonder whether you will understand what I mean when I say that that confidential communication of Miss Fitzwalter's put an end and a finish to your chance with me.'

'I can understand,' answered Harold resentfully, 'that that may have been the object of her communication. Scarcely fair play on her part; for she knows just as well as everybody else who is in the secret does that I only assumed responsibility for the authorship by Dick's own wish. It is rather hard lines, I think, that I should be accused of being a literary thief because I consented to oblige him.'

'Ah, I thought very likely you wouldn't see the point! I accuse you of nothing, nor does Miss Fitzwalter; I agree with her that you and your brother were entitled to make any arrangements between yourselves that suited you, although I am afraid this one may end by exposing you to some ill-natured comments. But the point with regard to you and me is that, since you didn't write *Renunciation*, you revert to what you were before—a very clever actor, with abilities which seem at first sight to point to there being something more in you, but which, when it comes to testing them, prove of no practical value. Don't you see that a husband of that stamp would never do for me?'

'Josephine,' said Harold, drawing his chair a little nearer and laying his fingers upon her wrist, 'you are pleased to talk as if

we were a couple of bargainers—as if I wanted to marry the only child of the man who is in possession of Dunville Manor, and as if I hadn't a sufficient equivalent to offer. But is that the truth? Is it true that we are as devoid of all capacity for romantic emotion as you pretend?

'Oh, I should think you might manage a good deal in that way,' she composedly returned, 'and even I, in the case of some simple, single-hearted man who honestly loved me—'

'Such as Desborough, for instance?'

'Such as Captain Desborough,' she assented. 'I don't know whether you have noticed that Captain Desborough, for all his easy-going good nature, is a rather masterful personage. He wouldn't stand much nonsense in his wife, I suspect; but, on the other hand, she would be able to rely upon him absolutely. Those are the right sort of men to marry, and in her heart every woman acknowledges it.'

'Is it possible,' Harold began incredulously, 'that you contemplate—'

She cut him short. 'Oh, it's possible; I don't say it's likely. What is now quite impossible is that I should ever consent to marry you. I have told you frankly that the thing might have come to pass. Let us be thankful that it didn't; for we should have led a cat and dog life as man and wife, and you would very soon have found yourself living apart from me on an annual allowance. I should recommend you—I hope I am not giving you bad advice, and I don't think I am—to marry Miss Fitzwalter, who knows pretty well what you are, who adores you *quand même*, and who will forgive you until seventy times seven. As for the Manor, I don't believe you really care about being Dunville of Dunville, and I doubt, after all, whether you would adorn the position. The stage, I end by thinking, is your place. So we will shake hands upon that and be friends; for, as I mentioned just now, I really do like you very much.'

(To be continued.)

Modder River.

II.

HERE, then, is the rest of it. When the infantry had to sag back to save themselves from our own guns, I felt that we had 'come to a hole in the ballad,' as we used to say at sea. Our gains were finished for awhile at least, and we two might as well go back and join the rest of the gang at the red house. Now by this red house was a little red dam, and here, therefore, was the chance to feed and water the horses again, for this was the heat of one of the hottest days that any of us could remember in this latitude. Also we might by luck chance on a bite ourselves—and sadly we needed it.

While the horses fed, then, and the men made coffee, I went up to the roof of the next house to keep a look out for any chance that might show. From that stand I marked a thin line of horsemen still going away and disappearing in a fold of ground to the north-west, and I debated what it meant, and if it were possible that they had quite abandoned all this side of the railway. It looked so likely that I made up my mind to prove the point, one way or another, by making a dash with my troop for a building on the near flank of the station ; and I was making my way out through the front room of the house again when I heard a very Bedlam of gun and Mauser, and the little red dam was whipped to froth, while all the ground about it was blinded with dust. The Boers had marked the sagging of our infantry ; their gunners had returned, and this was the sting they were putting into their renewal of the fight.

'Here's your horse !' shouted Taggart at the gate. 'Hell's after us !'

'Follow the rest !' I shouted, for the rest were racing to new cover as I caught my horse from his hand. 'I'll catch you !'

I was little time in bridling, and at the long wire fence bounding that side of the village I had overhauled Taggart. 'Where's the scoff ?' I yelled at him.

'They left it there still cooking,' answered he.

Green troops, that, to leave their cooking so fast. Old hands will hang on to scoff longer than to a trench. But I said no more than—'Here's a beggar back for the scoff. You get the fellows together by the drift there.'

There was a precious tin of condensed milk I had given them. That was still unopened on the wall—it went into one pocket. Kicking over the pot of boiling eggs I got half a dozen of those into another pocket. A great pot was boiling for coffee, and the coffee itself lay near by in a bag. I emptied the coffee into the pot and kicked the fire away. When we came back presently that should be good coffee. It was night, and the drink was cold before I saw it again. Then I mounted and rode back; but as I went I saw, away to the west, that the Boers who had gone out there a while ago were now rallied and were sweeping round towards the drift where I had first crossed. They were to try and outflank us then, now that they thought us retreating.

When I got back to the drift at Rosmead, where the infantry was being sifted and sorted into its proper units, the first thing that stopped me was the procession of wounded, borne feet first and shoulder high by the Argylls as they came in. 'Our own shells did it,' said the bearers simply. Then I saw Rimington talking to Pole-Carew, the brigadier, and though I little liked that Mike should see me, since I had nothing yet to show for the day's work, yet I tried to get at the two to report this new move of the Boers. Various officers headed me off, however; officers, I suppose, zealous priests of that divinity which doth hedge a British general in the field. They saw a dirty irregular approaching their fetish, and they threw themselves into the breach. I could not get near the general. Then I saw that the Boers I had wished to warn the general against were moving now in plain sight on the skyline. It mattered no longer; I drew off and found my gang together again, helping themselves to a sack of sugar that Parker had discovered. Rimington disappeared to carry out some order—so far luck.

Then a yell arose, and every officer of those who had headed me off seemed to be bawling at me in chorus. 'Look at those horsemen! What are they?'

'Boers; what else?' retorted I.

'What sort of an answer is that? How do you know that they are Boers?' demanded one ineffable specimen, the fussiest of them. 'The general wants proof.'

Now the general was not saying a word about it. Boers or not,

the brigadier was attending strictly to his first need—that of putting some sort of a shape upon the muddle of units there representing his brigade, as it had struggled through the river, and posting portions to defend this drift as a base for a present readvance. But the gentleman, the specimen, ended his clamour with the sneering jibe at irregulars which seems to be the shibboleth of his class.¹

I ought to have laughed at him, but you know the fool-pride that is my curse. Moreover, some of the men heard the jibe and were new enough to feel themselves touched in their honour. They were not troubling—they have since told me—as to what such officers might think of them, but they could not be shamed before the men of this infantry—a gallant weakness that. Those clapped spurs in and were away with a rush and a dash that hid them in a cloud of dust. I simply shouted to the rest to follow, and then laid my horse to overtake them.

We were clear of the far fence of the village before I could draw ahead and get the fellows into shape again. A little farther on and a wire fence stretched across our front, but a gap lay open for us to pass through, and for that I drew. We had a telescope with us, but it needed no glass to see the burghers or the move they were bent upon. Bold and steady they rode, some of them aping troop formation, drawing across our front so openly there on the skyline that I began to understand the clamour of those officers behind me when they demanded proof that these were Boers. This infantry of our left had seen nothing of our cavalry and mounted infantry all day. To that infantry these men in front, riding so coolly by in the broad open, might well seem to be our own Horse returning from some attempted flank movement. If I were to do the right thing, then, by the infantry, I must indeed 'prove' that these in front were Boers, as had been demanded. I must make contact with these Boers and force them to open fire or attempt to capture us, and so betray themselves to the glasses of the watching officers. We must 'play the game,' and this was the way it must be played.

My blood stirred a little as I gave the word that put the little troop into shape for the work. This was no question of skilful approach to gain the information upon which a battle might be won. It was no gaudy dash into a hot corner to capture guns or other tangible trophies. This was to be a quiet, steadfast approach to an almost certain end, for the Boers in their strength would hold themselves till the last minute against the foolishness of this eleven, hold themselves till at speaking distance they could demand our

The thing went to the other extreme before Belfast was fought.

surrender, and then——? I looked at the men behind as they followed, from Desmoir on the right to Taylor on the left, and I had little notion that they would ever surrender.

As we rode, those men who had apparently felt that jibe the most began to call aloud the proofs as they saw them that these in front were Boers. Here on the veldt they were arguing with the image of the man who had insulted them—arguing with the memory that rankled in their minds.

‘Can’t you see they are Boers?’ cried Parker scornfully. ‘See how they ride, butt on thigh. They are Boers if ever Boers were.’

But I was jealous that, if we were going to our finish, watched by the eyes of all that infantry, we should at least go proud and steady. ‘Of course they are Boers,’ called I to him. ‘What did you join for but to meet Boers? But you may still keep the line for all that; check a little now and drop into line.’

Then a voice on the left, Straw’s voice, where he also drew ahead as he rode with his face craned forward, chanting the proofs. ‘That’s Boers! see their horses tripple. British cavalry don’t tripple.’

‘Neither do they ride all of a heap,’ shouted I. ‘Get your dressing and keep your interval.’

Up through the blazing sunlight, yonder on the quivering windless skyline, the enemy drew silently across, every man an indigo separate shape even in the crowd their numbers made; for they were keeping open order, prepared against the shells which should tell them their trick was detected. And, because they never slacked or changed their pace for an instant, their front drew so far across my left that I gave the word to bring up the right shoulder and so continued towards them.

Nearer we drew, and a little clamour broke out amongst my men, who thought that because they could now swear to these in front for Boers it would be enough to ride back and tell it. But by this time we had come so far up that a rearward glance to right and left showed me all too clearly the full menace of this move of the enemy. A little more and the Boers would have the lower drift at their mercy, and take our disordered infantry between two fires. We were eleven men—could we do anything to stop them?

Only one chance—slenderest chance! except that in battle no chance but has a chance till it is destroyed. If we could come so close to them in open quiet that, when they challenged us to surrender, we could, by racing away, draw so many of them after us in chase that the rest would wait to see the outcome of it, then

not only our infantry but our guns also would see, and might with a rain of shells destroy this menace by driving this commando back in ruin over the skyline. There was no other hope, no other way. But oh ! if the Lancers had but been on this flank, for the ground was the fairest we had yet seen for charging over.

Regrets are waste when action is in hand. We must do our own. First I silenced the men. 'Come along steadily, now. And —quiet—damn it ! you don't expect to live for ever. Keep your interval and keep your dressing, or you'll have our own guns take you for Boers once more, and put you out of the field again.'

I looked at the faces of the men as they followed, and I was well content. They could not know my plan, and it was not possible to explain. Remember that they were not regulars, with the instinct of discipline to make them follow a mere sergeant into what they must have thought this waste—a sergeant, moreover, whom they had hardly known till yesterday, and whom some of them perhaps thought more than a little mad. Picture them following me up that long slope, bare of cover, towards that mass of men, and following at a walk only. It is well to ride in a whirlwind charge, and to give and take and be doing. But to ride at a walk, waiting for the wiping out, when you think all need for it is past, and when all the time you feel between your knees the good horse that might rush you away to safety—or at least by charging lessen the waiting for the final wound—you must admit that these men were of the true stuff that will not break away in the face of death, and that because it will have none of dishonour. Am I wrong in my pride of them ? or was I wrong in the word when I presently spoke—' We are doing well, *gentlemen* ' ?

The moment was come to do something. Our steady, shapely advance had begun to have an effect on the Boers. Those on the nearest edge of their mass drew in a little and went hesitatingly, as if in wonder, half shouldered towards us. The slightest thing might move them to decision. 'A volunteer !' I shouted ; ' a volunteer to go ahead and challenge them !'

Andrew Gemmell's horse was quickest in answering to the spur because he needed none. A good, game, red bay ; his eagerness had kept me checking his rider all day for being too forward. An eager pair. I was well content it should be they two for the need in hand, for I did not know then that Gemmell's eyes had been going to the bad all day through the blistering heat or I might have sent some other man. ' Go ahead, now, and challenge them,' said I. ' Keep your horse in hand, and when you turn, turn instantly

or they'll have you. Then come back hell-for-leather. I'll be watching, and I'll wait for you. Go, now !'

He went away at a swinging canter, buoyant and happy, and I turned to the other men. 'Keep coming steadily on at the walk, but keep your horses ready, and when I give the word to go about, then turn and ride like the devil back for the infantry.'

I caught the twinkle in Nolan's eye. 'Sergeant,' answered he, 'couldn't I ride back first and fill my water bottle, so when St. Patrick offers us that whisky in heaven we sha'n't lose the drink by waiting for the water, as McCarthy did ?'

At that allusion to Pat's pet story we none of us but smiled. And—'Did you say heaven ?' said Dick Delaporte. 'Don't trouble ; it's hell we're all going into, and that quick and lively. Here we are on top of 'em. Shall we ask 'em to hands up ?'

We were indeed 'on top of them.' I played my last card. 'We cannot go till our scout returns ; we cannot leave Gemmell. But I'll go fetch him back. Keep coming while I'm gone.'

I drew away at the gallop and laid on after Gemmell. Our work had touched winning ; the whole of this host of the Boers had drawn rein, their flanking move suspended ; their design upon the drift and the infantry below forgotten while they faced towards us, silent and immobile, in a huge crescent, into the hollow breast of which we were being enclosed.

In that crescent they had made another little crescent, a sort of little bay, into which Gemmell was riding. I pricked my horse faster—and found myself on the edge of a shallow circular depression or pan, literally crowded with Boers waiting our coming. Near ?—I found myself noting the colour of their hatbands and the sweep of their beards as I instinctively drew down to a walk and let my eye run from face to face of them. A great stillness seemed over all, till out of that stillness one with a ruddy beard challenged me, sharp and high, 'Hands up !'

This was the moment. I looked at Gemmell, yonder to the left front, and it was the moment for him, too. Another voice had challenged him, and I saw him pause, and then, as the rifles moved, saw him swing about in a jump and start back ; the good red bay stretched level, burning the wind to carry him clear.

A hundred voices were clamouring to have my hands up, but the work wanted yet the giving of one order to finish it. 'All right now,' I shouted over my shoulder to the men. 'Go about now ! Ride ! ride like hell !'

Swift as buck they went about, and wild as wild horses they

tore away for the river, while in the same bound I swung out towards the line of Gemmell's coming. There is no understanding of why any of us escaped. The blast of fire that tore past us should have utterly torn us to pieces. But I remember only the slow canter towards Gemmell's coming, while my horse tore on the tight held rein, with the nightmare slowness of time, till Gemmell was level with me, and I could let my own horse go as we raced after the rest, the Boers almost stretching their hands for us.

A stride or two and my horse almost leaped through himself as a bullet cut him across the off shoulder. He flew like a thing demented through the din, and not till I had overtaken and drawn ahead of the flying troop could I get him in hand again. Then, as I looked along to the left of the line, I saw Parker's grey, neck stretched and nostrils wide, but riderless, the empty saddle down on his flank—one man of the best had paid for the rest.

I checked and looked back, but there was no sign of Parker between us and the headlong front of the chasing Boers where they followed, shooting from the hand as they came, the nearest less than a hundred yards behind. They must have ridden over Parker; no going back could help him now.

Then my mind remembered the wire fence we had threaded through in coming. I feared the men had forgotten it in their dash for the river. I had no mind that they should come to an end now at the fence after what they had done already. I leaned down and sent my horse ahead again for every hair that was on him.

Commend me to a good horse—to a horse that ran unmastered till he was a seven-year old—to a horse that smarts from a flesh wound and is mad with a mad desire to outstrip all the roaring flight of chasers and chased. It seemed no time at all till I was level again, till I had drawn ahead on the right and was forging across to the left, yelling insistently 'Wire! wire! This way the gap! This way! wire!'

My voice was not heard so much as my example was followed. All save two passed safely through the gap with me, and those two, Desmoir and Gemmell, wide on each flank, crashed through the fence at different places, and then, while the burghers checked for fear of a like fall, remounted and got so far away before their horses dropped that both came in afoot unhit.

The standing miracle of battle is how the bullets can miss. It was one miracle the more that not a man of us got it as we went through that single gap in the fence. Then the fence became our helper, as the Boers dismounted to break it down before they could crowd

after us, while we raced on along the road skirting the village till, at this end of the short lane leading up from the drift, I saw the heads of a company of infantry, neck deep in a narrow ditch, late the enemy's entrenchment, lining the road, the outcast earth making a bank behind their helmets so that at a short distance they were invisible.

Reining in beside the officer commanding, 'Boers ! shoot ! ' was all I shouted.

'Are your fellows all clear ? ' he demanded.

'All clear here,' and at the word the infantry let go, every rifle pumping out the nickel. The Boers had come as far as they were to come that chase.

Then I marked one burgher dismount. Dressed in black, he had been conspicuous from the first, a leader among them ; and now, all in the open, farthest forward of them all, he stepped down. With a deliberation comely to see he passed his arm through the rein on his horse's neck, levelled the rifle at his hip while he judged the distance, and next, dropping on one knee, lifted his piece with a clean sure movement, drew bead, and fired.

I was the only man showing over much, for I was mounted still. Even so I should still have known who he shot at by the nearness of the bullet to me, for it was only the excited movement of my horse which spoilt that bullet getting me. But the shot set all the rest of the burghers who had followed to firing, some from their horses, some dismounted where they had halted, scattered all over the open.

'Shoot that man in black ! ' I shouted to a section which left the trench to lie out in the open for better shooting, for the trench was nearly end on to the Boers. But no shot seemed to stir the man, and cleanly and deliberately as before he lifted and fired at me again.

'Hold my horse, Taggart,' said I, dismounting ; for Taggart had remained with me.

Jumping across the trench I walked well out from the flank of the prone men, and there kneeling in the open, as the other man was kneeling, I took a shot at him, and shot for shot we answered one another in deliberate succession till we had fired three times apiece. His fourth, however, came hurriedly, and without waiting for mine he rose, gripped the mane and mounted. His horse was turning to go as I fired, and I must have fired low, if, indeed, it was I who hit the horse, for the horse gave a lunge that came near to unseating him. But he gathered the horse again into shape and

so went away, the rest of the burghers drawing after him, and we were left to keep the ground we held.

It is told me now that the man in black was son to one of their best leaders, and that he is dead of a wound gotten there as he knelt. I do not know; I only know that it was good to have so gallant a fighting man single me out and be mine enemy, shot for shot, till one of us could stay no longer. I should have liked to have met him in a truce. And if you say that we were both vile shots to miss each other at that range, then I say go to the nearest race track, take an empty rifle, and then, after a neck and neck race only once round the course, jump down and try to take aim —at a haystack if you like. You'll understand after that.

I watched the Boers go, and they went but slow and unhurriedly, as though they had a scorn of us for all they had left the field to us. It did not matter. The thing was done, the chance had won. At the cost of one man and two horses we had drawn the Boers from their line, and baulked the move which otherwise might have put our battle in jeopardy beyond guess. When these who had followed us should rejoin the main body on the rise it would be too late to seize that drift below—our people would be ready to meet them.

'It was sheer damned insolence in you fellows,' said one officer who had watched us go.

'Superb insolence, though,' added another.

I did not tell them what I thought it was.

But we had got off so cheaply that I thought we paid too much in letting Parker lie out yonder on that long slope. He might be only so wounded that a doctor still could save him if he were found in time. 'I am following up these burghers to look for a man of mine who was shot off that grey,' said I to the officer nearest. 'You might see your men don't open on me; our infantry have been doing it most of the day.'

He promised, and I rode out, alone this time, telling Taggart to get the rest together by the dam and get to food while I was gone. As I went I noted that some of those who had just chased us were lying now in some Kaffir huts and timber to the left, for they sniped me briskly in passing, till the sound drew upon them the fire of the company in the trench, which quietened them awhile. Coming to the gap in the fence, I marked the lone mimosa on the ridge, where the first of the returning Boers were clustering. Taking a line on that I kept straight on till I reached the spot where I had first seen Parker's riderless horse.

Slowly from here I began the search, zigzagging to and fro amongst the great ant heaps as I went, till presently the burghers beyond apparently decided that I was no belated man of their own but one of the enemy, and so to be shot at. They opened on me heavily enough to make my horse very uneasy, smarting as he was still from his wound. And as if bullets from in front were not enough I heard the 'click-clock' from behind—our own fellows were letting me have it also.

Every moment, however, I thought I must surely light upon Parker, and so every moment I drew nearer to the burghers, till at last they must have taken me for a wounded man of their own, who could not guide his horse, for their fire ceased and two of them rode out towards me to help me in. It was a fine moment; I must either deal treacherously with them or go. I had to go. At an easy canter then I left, thereby drawing a double fire from our own men. The two good fellows behind drew rein, looked at me going, and then quietly put about and rejoined their own.

The snipers in the huts took up my coming and cracked away at me in a great bustle till I got home to the trench again, where one or two began to explain and apologise for their firing. But I was weary, and in return did but compliment them on the fine flavour of their asininity, and so sat quiet awhile.

But as the sun dropped down I grew like a man who wants all his children home by the hearth before he shuts the door upon the night and lies him down to rest. The more I thought on poor old Parker, the stiffer I grew that the pifflers on the ridge and these fellows here should meddle with my search for my own man. Without a word I mounted and went out again.

The sun was down and the day glooming to night as I went. This time the snipers troubled me little and our own people not at all. The burghers on the ridge were now scarce more than a mere outpost, and their aim was little worth against the edge of dark as it rose behind me. But I found no Parker.

Then, to end my quest, came a new upcast. The snipers in the huts found the day wear late. It was time to stop work; time to get their horses and ride quietly home to camp and coffee; to news of the day and word of the morrow; to sleep and to a while of quiet. Thus they rode out now, and, heading for home by the quietest way, took a cast which must bring them to the spot where I was searching. In the darkling I counted them as they came, something like fifty in number, riding by twos and threes, butt on thigh and reins slack, bearded men and big men, talking on the

day's doings and comparing criticisms soberly. And I saw that it was time for me, too, to be gone home ; I could work no more for that day either. Moreover, to stay here was to put these tired men to the trouble of dealing with me. I was so weary that I thought on their weariness, and so turned quietly for home.

Slowly and soberly they came on, and slowly I edged away out of their track. We were so near in passing that some of them at this edge lifted their faces towards me, so that their fellows, lifting, too, at that, ceased their other talk to cast a brief glance at me, perhaps to comment with a terse word as to my presence there, while they peered at me against the first dark of the east, I looking over my shoulder at them against the last light of the west. But, because they felt that their day's work was enough, they fell to their old talk again, and so continued on into the dusk and home.

I had been so crowded out of my direction that I found myself arriving at the little red house where we had intended food before, and, groping my way into the yard in the dark, I found the coffee, cold now, but good as coffee ever was when I dipped my face into the great pot as it stood, and sucked up a long, long draught of it. Refreshed at that, I went out into the veldt a third time, this time afoot, and a third time I returned without success.

Slowly I rode home in the dark at last, in between our outposts ; and as I passed through the lane that led to Rosmead drift the night was cheerful with many fires, each with its little group of tired men sitting round it, cooking the vegetables from the near gardens, with duck, or fowl, or the flesh of pig or sheep, carved unhandily, but smelling gratefully to hungry nostrils. It stirred me the more for the lad out yonder on the dark veldt. But away up the river, where our right still lay, the firing still continued ; so heavy and so continuous the yellow flare of it across the night that it reminded one of the blazing rows of naphtha lamps in some huge pleasure fair at home. Yet the real battle, the work of any value, had ended when the company here in the trench stopped the rush of those Boers whom we had baulked of their attempt to outflank us. All since then had been mere letting off of ammunition.

It was dawn when I found Parker at last. We had done so much that day that Pole-Carew had more for us to do that night. Learning at last that the general was disabled he had promptly formed a plan for a real battle next day, and I was so glad to see light at last in all this fog of fighting that I was pleased enough to receive an order from him to go out at two o'clock in the

morning and find whether the Boers still held the ridge of the lone mimosa.

Taggart went with me, refusing to let me go alone, and the rest were all away despatch carrying from commander to commander through the chaos of the army. We found the ridge abandoned, the fire of the outpost still smouldering ; and day was dawning with the faint reddening of a pallid line betwixt the dusk of the wan starred sky and the dark of the earth beneath as we started back.

Picking our way carefully we had got some half-way back when my eyes, noting a great ant heap, noted also a ghostly shape stretched this side it, touched with an eerie grey from the widening morn beyond. 'Yea !' said I softly, 'here is Parker at last ; dead !'

But for answer—the ghostly shape not stirring the while—a cracked voice came up, 'I am not dead. I want a drink of water, that's all. I'm all right.' With one move we were both down beside him together. He had been shot through the breast as we turned to go about yesterday, and the bullet had touched his spine in passing out. The wound is mortal. Small wonder that he thought his breast was shot to pieces.

We had no water. 'Gallop for the ambulance, Taggart !' said I. 'You can let the general know that the Boers are gone at the same time.'

'Gallop for water ; hang the ambulance !' said poor Parker.

As Taggart went away as swiftly as he dared in the half light, Parker spoke again, his teeth chattering the while with the deadly chill that follows a mortal wound, as well as with the chill of the night. 'Christ ! but it was long waiting for you to come.'

'And it was long, too, the finding you,' was all I could answer him.

Taggart came back with the water, and close behind him four kindly privates of the nearest outpost, no ambulance having as yet crossed the river—a lucky thing for Parker. Unwrapping their putties the four passed them under him, and, lifting him very gently, bore him off to camp. Rimington says we should all have been shot for our cheek yesterday, but I think one was enough if that one be a man who could keep such courage as that to greet us after the long, slow, crawling hours of the night's agony.

Well, I'll write you no more of battles in this war. There'll be many to come, but I shall see no more days like the day of Modder River. It doesn't come the same man's way twice in the one war. Let this be enough, then ; and for conclusion let me give you the

last lines of some that I wrote last night after the battle, while Parker was still missing and before I knew that the Boers were gone.

God . . . help us this day
To quit ourselves like men,
Whate'er betide the fray :
Or it be lost or won
Keep us but true, and then
Thy Will be done.
Amen.

A. O. VAUGHAN.

In Arcady.

THE clouds, which through the day had been slowly gathering, now hung in massed battalions, covering the land as with a pall, and giving the December landscape a sevenfold gloom. In the valleys the air had a shrewdness that made the blood tingle, but in the upland fields, the wind, blowing from the great plain and across the treeless Downs, nipped one to the bone. Thin spears of ice were forming on the shallow pools, and the tufts of coarse Down grass were white with hoar-frost and stiff and unyielding to the feet.

The frosty air brought a confusion of sounds. The clang of sheep-bells, the quavering cry of many bleating sheep, the crisp barking of a dog, and, farther away, but sounding through all, the plaintive low of homing cattle. But nothing moving was in sight, and save for those sounds the waste might have belonged to some forsaken star.

But presently over one of the low chalk hills broke a tangle of huddled sheep, with a dog barking and snapping at their heels; and a moment or two later came a man who whistled to the dog, waved his arm southward, watched a moment to see that his silent direction was understood, then strode swiftly down the hill, crushing the frozen grass with his iron-bound boots.

In the lee of the hill was a field of turnips, with, in one part of it, a short line of hurdles closely packed with straw to form a barrier against the wind, and here another man was busy carrying other hurdles from a distant corner of the field, and throwing them on the ground. He touched his hat to the newcomer who, without a word, took up a great iron bar and started to drive the hurdles into the ground, so as to form a triangle with those already set up. Having carried what he deemed a sufficient number of these hurdles, the hind helped him with his task, and presently the triangle was perfect, save for a rail or two. Then they took large bundles of straw and began to pack the

hurdles so as to form another wall of straw similar to the one already in existence. Whilst they were thus engaged, the flock of ewes, heavy with young, stamped round the hill and gathered by the newly made pen, watching the two workers with fathomless eyes. But the dog, frisky with youth, would not let them rest. Snapping and barking, he kept them in uneasy movement, until they showed signs of breaking away; then his master shouted to him angrily and threw a stone, which sent him slinking down the field.

‘That dog is a thought too spry,’ said the farmer, turning to the straw again.

‘Yees, but he’m young yet; an’ ‘e’ll improve,’ replied the hind. ‘Never didden zee zo good a dog for the age of en.’

The farmer nodded in acquiescence, then looked at the heavy sky, and remarked, ‘T’ess going to snow.’

‘Et do zeem zo! ’

Silence fell again, and they worked steadily for some five minutes; then the lowing of cattle near at hand broke on their ears, and beyond the stone dyke at the far side of the field some red-backed Devon cows came into view. Immediately the farmer saw them he sprang upright, and began to walk rapidly across the turnips to the stile in the corner where the road turned. The cows wandered lazily down the road, cropping now and again at the green undergrass, or nibbling some of the tender shoots of the bramble the year had produced. Behind them, a switch in her hand and a dog at her heels, came a girl, occasionally flicking the back of a loiterer with the switch. Sharp as was the air, she wore a white curtained sun-bonnet with the strings untied, and beneath it showed a pleasant face, cheeks as rosy as a ‘tomput’ apple, eyes as blue as June skies. A sparkle of mischief came into her eyes as she saw the young farmer seated upon the stile, and when she came opposite to him she stopped.

‘How do ‘ee do, Jan?’

‘Pretty well, thank ‘ee, Zalome. How be you?’

The girl disregarded the question, and made a remark about the weather; then, yielding to a feminine weakness for gossip, asked, ‘Have ‘ee zeen Laban Bishop?’

The farmer started, and there was a sudden quickening of interest as he answered sharply, ‘No, is ‘e whome?’

‘Yes; come yesterday an’ do stay over Zunday. They do tell as ‘e be getting along won’erful well, and have a fine varm down by Axminster; milks nineteen cows, if all as we do hear be true.’

‘Then what do ‘e want to leave ‘em vor, to come gallivantin’ round here?’

The girl laughed mischievously. ‘That’s what everybody be wondering; an’ father asked en straight out this marning, an’ ‘e zaid as ‘e’d come to find a wife, the maids down to Axminster not being to his mind.’ Then she added inconsequently, but perhaps not irrelevantly, ‘He’m a-coming down to our place to a little party we be giving to-morrow night.’

‘Never!’

‘Yees, an’ his sister Joan an’ some more maids an’ men; an’ father said as if I saw ‘ee I was to ask ‘ee too, an’ would ‘ee please vor to come early?’

‘De-lighted, Zalome!’ Then with sudden consternation, ‘But ‘tis market day! I do allow you’d forgotten that.’

‘Noa. But our Dick be going, while I do zee to the china an’ the girdle-cakes an’ the vowls. You’ll ‘ave to leave the market early.’

‘It do zeem zo.’

‘Well, I must be pushing along,’ said the maid, tapping the rump of the nearest cow smartly with her switch, and moving quickly down the road. For a moment the farmer stood irresolute, then, with the air of a man who had taken a sudden decision he called—

‘Zalome!’

‘Ye-es, Jan?’ the girl answered, inquiringly.

‘Wait wan moment till I’ve had a word with Huddy, then I’ll goa with ‘ee zo far as the cross-roads.’ The girl waited whilst he ran across the turnips and gave some directions to the hind, then when he came back and climbed the stile they fell into step and walked side by side down the road. A constrained silence came upon them, most difficult to break through. The man had much to say and knew not how to say it, and the girl could not or would not help him. So they walked for some distance, until the silence became irksome, and the man was really grateful when a few flakes of snow came fluttering from the leaden skies.

‘Do look terr’ble like snow,’ he said, relieved for the moment.

‘Terr’ble.’

Then the silence fell again, and lasted until the cross-roads were reached, when the farmer grew desperate, realising that his opportunity was slipping from him.

‘Zalome!’

‘ Yes, Jan ? ’

‘ You baint a-thinking ov Laban Bishop, be ‘ee ? ’

The girl laughed merrily. ‘ Why, Jan, whatever have that to do with ‘ee ? Now, I do allow as Laban be a terr’ble vine yellow, an’ ‘e’m pushing along won’erfully. I shouldn’t wonder if— ’

‘ I’d break the neck of en fer two pins,’ interrupted her companion savagely.

‘ Why, Jan, whatever vor ? What have ‘e a-done ? ’

‘ E’ve dared to look up to ‘ee.’

‘ Oh, az vor that— ’ the girl began, then stopped, and ended with a laugh. The man stood dumb, and a gust of wind, blowing across the Downs and bringing a whirl of snow with it, made the girl turn quickly after the cows, leaving him standing in the middle of the road ; but as she went she called over her shoulder, ‘ Now, don’t ‘ee vorget to-morrow night, Jan, or— ’

‘ What ? ’

‘ I’ll marry Laban Bishop, zo zure as eggs ! ’ Then with another burst of laughter she was gone.

II.

THE party at Marshallsay Farm was in full swing. Farmer Stoodly had insisted on supper being served early, knowing well how the influence of good cheer makes for merriment, and breaks down that stiffness which invariably characterises a rustic party in the earlier stages. He now sat close in by the great fire of logs for warmth, whilst he had his coat off for coolness, and superintended the three-handled cider mugs (locally yclept ‘ God-forgive-mes ’) with their precious contents.

‘ Steady, maid ! Not too much ! ’ he said to Salome, who was pouring gin from a stone jar. ‘ There, that’ll do first-rate ! Now a mo’sel o’ ginger—not such a won’erful girt lot, about zo much as will cover a zixpence. That’s et ! that’s et ! Now pop it en, and push the mugs nearer the vire—closer ! But not too close. There ! that’ll do prime ! ’ Then, wiping the sweat from his shiny crown, he turned to his guests, who had been watching this delicate operation in silence, and bade them make themselves at home—‘ Vor I be at whome, if you bain’t, neighbours ! ’

The joke was ancient, but had the honour paid to it that its age demanded, and no man laughed any the less heartily because

he had heard the same remark made at every party he had ever attended on the countryside. Then when the laughter ended he spoke again :

‘ I zim we might have a drop o’ music now, while the zider be warmin’. Zalome, will ‘ee be zo good as to oblige at the pianner? An’ maybe Laban’ll zing “Green Broom.”’

Laban agreed that he would, and Salome seated herself at the instrument, which for to-night had been carried out of the front room to the kitchen. ‘Green Broom’ met the taste of the company so well that the singer received an encore, to which he responded with ‘Widdicombe Fair.’ So well known was this to the assembled guests that they declined to allow him to sing it alone, and with perfect unanimity, but with more noise than harmony, joined him from the very first line.

‘ Tom Pearse, Tom Pearse, lend me zur grey mare,
 All along, down along, out along lea;
 For I want for to goa to Widdicombe Fair,
 Wi’ Bill Brewer, Jan Stewert, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy, Dan’l
 Whiddon, Harry Hawk, old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh an’ all,
 Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh an’ all.’

As they reached the last line of the song, which careers thus through eight verses, they heard the outside gate bang, then sounds which told them that the late-comer was busily engaged kicking the snow off his boots in the porch. They watched the door in silence, each conjecturing who might be the other side of it—Salome, in particular, in breathless suspense, ardently hoping that it might prove to be John Fowler; for ‘Jan’ so far had not appeared, and seemed likely to prove himself a laggard in love.

The door opened, its great iron hinges groaning terribly, and Salome turned sharply to the piano and began to strum the keys to hide her disappointment, for the newcomer was a wizened old man who carried a fiddle in a green baize bag.

The old man was hailed with delight by the young, for his coming was the signal for dancing; and though there was not too much room in the Marshallsay kitchen, yet, as Laban Bishop said, ‘there mit o’ been less,’ and in that all found a shred of consolation.

‘ Drow your coat on the back o’ the zettle,’ cried the farmer, ‘ and keep yer hat on ef ‘ee like, Amos. But avore you do begin

just taste a drop o' zider to warm 'ee after the walk in the snow. Here, Zalome, hand en the "God-forgive-me"!' The fiddler took the three-handled mug, carefully selected the side which had been farthest from the fire, then drained it like a man. He stood up for a moment, breathing deeply after the draught, then ventured, 'Tes a pretty tipple, vor zure!' and without another word turned to his fiddle-bag. The kitchen was cleared, partners were duly selected, Laban claiming Salome for the first dance (and keeping her for the second), and soon the whole party was in the whirl of a country dance. Dancing creates thirst, and in 'Dorset Dear' thirst means cider, and in consequence there was such a demand for this beverage that at the third dance Farmer Stoddy, going to the jars to refresh himself, found both empty.

'Drat the thing! An' the zider be to the shed in the li'l orchard! Here, Zalome, do 'ee pop out an' fill the jars.'

Salome was in the act of taking the jars when Mr. Laban Bishop stepped forward and, gallantly offering his company, took them one in each hand. If Salome had not been piqued by Jan's absence, possibly she would not have accepted Laban's escort, but as it was, throwing a cloak over her shoulders, she stepped out into the snow and the moonlight with him by her side.

All the way to the shed in the little orchard they walked without speaking, and there, after Salome had unlocked the door, Laban filled the jars from the huge hogshead, and they commenced the return journey, still in silence. But half-way back to the house the man halted under a large tree, and set the jars down in the snow to rest his fingers, which were cramped in the narrow handles. He seemed about to speak, when Salome herself broke the silence.

'Look, Mr. Bishop.'

She was pointing to the bough above his head. The snow hung heavy on the tree; but in spite of that, shining under the moon, in the dark mass on the bough he recognised the white berries of the mistletoe. He grabbed for her, but missed, and with laughter she slipped out of the shadow of the tree, never thinking that he would leave the jars to follow her. But there she miscalculated, and with laughter on her part and earnestness on his the chase began. And she led him a dance, 'vor zure.' In and out among the bewildering shadows of the trees she ran, and over the treeless spaces where the snow was deepest, and he followed hard after her. All round the little orchard, and through

the gate into the great cider orchard, then back again, the maid dodging in and out among the apple-trees, the man striving his best to outwit her in vain. But close by the shed where the cider was stored she made a slip, and in a twinkling he had her in his arms, panting and breathless. The tree under which they stood had no mistletoe to justify the act, nor did he look for any, but kissed her with dry lips. For a moment he held her, then he said 'Zalome ?'

'Yees ?'

'Ee heard me tell the varmer I be come down here to look vor a wife ?'

'Yees.'

'Twas 'ee I meant.'

'Nonsense, Laban Bishop.'

'Tis God's truth ! An' I've a tidy varm, milking nineteen cows, an' a little gig wi' yollow wheels to goa to market in. What do 'ee zay to et, Zalome ?'

For the time, maybe, Salome was dazzled by the splendour thus unfolded, for she said nothing, and Laban, growing anxious, pressed her again.

'Zay YEEs, Zalome !'

And Salome, after one fleeting thought of the laggard Jan, said 'Yees !'

'I won'er what vather'll zay ?' she cried, a moment later.

'That et do teake a terr'ble girt while to draw a li'l drap o' zider ! What have 'ee done wi' the jars ?'

They started apart. The voice might have come out of the ground, but it really came from the shadow of the shed, where the farmer stood chuckling at the fright he had given them. Then back they went to the house, recovering the jars on their way ; and when the farmer had given out the great news their united health was drunk in boisterous fashion, with many more or less wise remarks and observations that would have staggered Solomon in all his wisdom ; and with the general conclusion that it omened well, 'an' did ought to be a good Chrizmastide,' they resumed the dancing in the whirl of 'Haste to the Wedding.'

And just at that moment Jan Fowler, lying in Dorchester hospital with two fractured ribs and a broken arm, the result of his horse slipping in the snow, was thinking of Salome, and, remembering her threat, groaned to think of the opportunity this accident gave to his rival.

III.

THE banns were called the following Sunday, and the wedding was to be on Old Christmas Day ; but in the short time between the engagement and the wedding Salome suffered many misgivings. When she heard of John Fowler's accident, and his slackness was thus explained, sudden regret overtook her. Not but that she was doing very well for herself. Laban milked nineteen cows on a farm of his own, and had 'a li'l gig wi' yellow wheels,' whilst Jan helped his father on a smaller farm and drove to market in a common, old-fashioned trap. To be sure, Jan's wife would be mistress in his father's house, for Mrs. Fowler had been dead these five years and Jan had neither sister nor brother ; but 'all the zame 'tweren't like having a whomestead o' your own !' In this she tried to find consolation, but failed dismally, and so heard her banns published without the pleasure usual on such occasions. The week following the first publication of the banns she was in a strait betwixt the two, and her regard for Jan threatened to overcome the attractions of Laban's farm and gig. But she had not the courage either to break the engagement or postpone the wedding, and so suffered many torments. In the third week, wandering up the road in a state of indecision, having that morning had a letter from Laban making some arrangements, a brilliant idea came to her. She wondered she had never thought of it before.

There grows in Arcady a potent herb, known to natives by the name of ' livelong,' which amongst many virtues has the power to help any maid beset with two suitors to the momentous decision between the two. To be sure, 'twas winter and the herb was not now to be found ; but Salome had heard that 'lad's-love' was a good substitute for it, and that was at hand in a sheltered corner of the garden at Marshallsay. She hastened home, nipped three long sprigs from the southernwood bush, and carrying them to her room set them separately in three vases, and arranged them one at each end and the other in the middle of the mantelshelf. Then, according to the directions which govern this rite, she named the middle piece with her own name, and the pieces to the right and left with the names of her suitors, respectively Laban and Jan. This done, she left her room in a more contented frame of mind, quite satisfied that by this means an infallible decision would be made for her ; for the mystic law which operates in this rite says that the sprig which stands for the man whom the maid is

to marry will bend towards the central sprig, whilst the one representative of the man rejected of fate will turn away therefrom. It is a simple rule for the solution of the knotty problem of two equally desirable lovers, and has governed many a happy choice in Arcady.

For the next few days Salome watched this love's barometer with absorbing interest. The first morning there was little change in their relative positions. The second morning both were bowed towards the central sprig, which itself was bent impartially towards the middle of the room. The third morning when she observed them she gave a gasp, for the southernwood in the process of drying had twisted more, and now the right-hand piece was still inclined to the middle sprig, whilst that in the left-hand vase turned abruptly away.

'Oh, 'tis Laban!' she said without enthusiasm, and tried to find consolation in the thought of the 'li'l gig wi' yellow wheels.'

The next morning the positions were reversed, and the sprig that was for Jan turned towards her in a marked fashion, whilst that for Laban inclined away.

'No! 'tis Jan after all!' she whispered, and there was a note of gladness in her voice.

And it was Jan the next morning, and the next after, which was Old Christmas Day and her wedding morning, and she noted with eagerness that the central sprig, which so far had remained impartially bent between the two, in the night had twisty awry and now was turned towards the left-hand sprig. And at ten o'clock she was to be married to Laban! Whatever were the Fates about, and was ever maid in such a pass before?

At nine o'clock she donned her wedding finery, and at nine-thirty, feeling very miserable, she climbed into the trap with her father and mother, to drive to the church a mile and a half away. At the cross roads, drawn full across their way, a smart trap was standing, and on the whip was tied a large white wedding favour. The man in the trap kept his face averted, and Farmer Stoodly audibly wondered 'Whatever thic vool be about!' Then, as they drew nearer, he shouted to him to draw aside, 'an' not stand mooning there like a cow!'

At his cry the man turned his face to them for the first time, and Salome gave vent to a sobbing 'Oh!' for the man was John Fowler, with a face white and pinched and his left arm in a sling.

'Why, Jan! Et be you, be et?' said the farmer, drawing rein. 'I thought 'ee was in the horspital to Darchester!'

‘Came out yesterday,’ said John shortly.

‘Howsomever, ‘ee be welcome, real welcome, to the weddin’ feast. I zee ‘ee’ve a-heerd.’ And he pointed to the other’s wedding favour with his own whip.

‘Yees, I’ve a-heerd; an’ I’ve a word to zay to your darter before her do goa to church. I don’t mind ‘ee hearin’; fact is, ‘tis best ‘ee should, varmer!’ And he turned to Salome.

‘Zalome! Twadn’t vair!’

‘Noa, Jan, *twadn’t vair!*’

‘But I guess ‘ee didn’t knoaw to the time?’ he said softly.

‘Noa, Jan, I didn’t knoaw to the time, an’ I thought——’

‘No call to zay et, maid; I do knoaw what ‘ee thought: an’, howsomever, tiddn’t too late to change your mind yet.’

‘Noa, tiddn’t. *Not eet!*’ whispered the girl, and her face was burning.

‘Then I call on ‘ee to do the right now!’ He stood in the trap and waved a blue paper with his uninjured arm. ‘Get down an’ come ‘long o’ me. ‘Tis a licence. I got en two days zince to Darchester, an’ us can be married to-day. Will ‘ee come?’

‘Vor zure I will, Jan,’ said Salome, thinking of the signs the lad’s-love had given, and beginning to climb from the trap.

‘Why, dall’et all! what be this?’ shouted Farmer Stoodly in amazement.

‘Noa harm, varmer, noa harm whatsomever. Only your darter be agwine to marry me ‘stead o’ Laban. I reckon your mistress had better come ‘long of us an’ zee the ceremony, while you do drive to church an’ tell ‘em that the wedding be to Darchester. We’ll be back along in dree hours. Come on, mother.’

Mrs. Stoodly descended from one trap and climbed into the other, whilst the farmer looked on astonished.

‘Well, I’ll be dalled! You be a wanner, Jan Vowler!’

John had already gathered up the reins and handed them to Salome, then he passed her the whip, flicking the horse as he did so, and as they began to move down the road he called, ‘Best drive vast, or they’ll be waitin’ vor ‘ee to church, varmer!’

Salome waved her whip, and they bowled merrily down the road. The farmer watched them till they were out of sight, then as he touched up his horse he said to himself, ‘Dall’et all! ‘tes a won’erful curious thing, a maid’s heart! An’ it mit ha’ been worse, et mit ha’ been worse—the weddin’ vittles mit ha’ been wasted!’

A Metaphysical Problem.

A GOOD little girl and a bad little boy,
 Through sharing the same occupations,
 Grew very great friends, to the grief and the joy,
 Respectively, of their relations.

For the good little girl, by the daily contact
 With the bad little boy, became naughty ;
 From modest and careful she grew—it's a fact—
 Pert, careless, conceited, and haughty ;

While the bad little boy, by her goodness inspired,
 Enlisted 'neath Virtue's bright banners ;
 Till all whom he met with remarked and admired
 His diligence, truth, and good manners.

And thus they combined, as it were, to destroy,
 Or rather reverse their position,
 Till a *bad* little girl and a *good* little boy
 Attested the fact of transition.

Now what is the moral ? (My head's in a whirl
 With the lessons this tale is affording.)
 Are you bad like the boy ?—Are you good like the girl ?—
 For you see it will differ according.

To the good I say 'Don't,' to the bad I say 'Do'
 Make friends with your opposite neighbour ;
 Yet should you *both* take my advice it is true
 It will prove an impossible labour.

If the bad seek the good, and the good fly the bad,
 A circle unending they follow.
 No ; one must be passive—the lass or the lad,
 Or both—when my moral seems hollow.

The true question's this: 'Would you have *him* or *her*
Remain as the final offender?'

Or, to put it in brief, 'Are the folks you prefer
Of the male or the feminine gender?'

But Ah! what a question to answer! And I,
In responding, decline to be leader,
For the dullest of wits must perceive the reply
Will depend on the sex of each reader.

P. LITTLEWOOD.

A Rebel at the Court of Louis XIV.

*THE LETTERS OF CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH, DUCHESS
OF ORLEANS.*

HISTORY, which loves dramatic contrasts, never produced one more striking than when the young daughter of Prince Charles Louis, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, arrived at the Court of Louis XIV. to take the place of the charming and unhappy Henrietta of England as wife to the great King's brother. This German girl, rustic and sentimental, with her sturdy Teutonic frankness and her intense patrician pride—the pride of a small and poor Court, which may be noble or ridiculous as you like to take it—came into a society in which by tastes, by habits, by principles, she felt herself a stranger. And a stranger she remained to the end of her long life, during which she solaced a heart, that ever beat true to the Rhineland, by that long, detailed correspondence with her German relatives which gives so faithful and spirited a picture of her life and surroundings.

No one can be really said to know the period of Louis XIV. who has not at his fingers' ends the letters of Madame. For mere literary charm they will not compare with some that have been left us by women less celebrated than the incomparable Sévigné; but their frankness, humour, and intelligence give them a salt and savour of their own.

The most interesting in the voluminous mass of letters written by the Duchess of Orleans between 1671, when she came into France, and 1722, when she died, were those addressed to her aunt, the Electress Sophia, mother of our George I., who was distinguished in her own day as the friend and correspondent of Leibnitz. She had been brought up by this woman—shrewd, observant, sceptical; she had inherited her love of knowledge, her hatred of shams, and her vein of occasionally Rabelaisian pleasantry. She lived with her aunt from 1659 to 1663, and then

went back to Heidelberg, the beautiful town which she never ceased to love. In 1722, shortly before her death, she wrote thus to her half-sister :

‘There is not in the world a better air than that of Heidelberg. No one better than I can understand, my dearest Louise, what you must have experienced there. I cannot think of it without the keenest emotion, but I will not say more about it to-night ; it would make me too sad, and would hinder me from sleeping.’

Is there not something pathetic in these words of the aged woman, in whom, after fifty years in the most brilliant Court of Europe, the yearning for her childhood’s home is still so strong as to drive sleep from her eyes ?

With all her *brusquerie* and caustic humour, there was an element of romance and a love of wild Nature about the girl, who used to get up at five o’clock in the morning and wander in the woods, eating her breakfast of bread and cherries on the heights above Heidelberg. Even then, as in after-years at Versailles, she was willingly alone, and was always good company for herself.

The poor little Princess was not to be left for long to her bread and cherries, her lonely rambles, and her books. Something of a bookworm and something of a tomboy, she was introduced, as a bride of nineteen, into the inner circle of a society splendid, courtly, thoroughly frivolous, and passably corrupt. She seems to have considered the prospect before her without much enthusiasm, but as ‘all in the day’s work’—which it was. The chief use of a little Princess was to assist her family by making a suitable alliance. Her father, whom she loved tenderly, pointed out that her marriage with the brother of his formidable neighbour would materially smooth a path which had its difficulties. This was quite enough for her at the time ; the great trouble of her after-life was that the sacrifice so willingly made turned out to have been in vain. The impecunious Elector had hard work to pay the dowry that he had promised with his daughter, and had to endure endless vexation in consequence.

‘Our neighbours the French,’ he wrote, six months before his death, ‘give me no peace, and do not wish that I should have any comfort in my life. They are still asking more than 500,000 livres, besides the 80,000 that I have already paid them for arrears.’

The Duchess of Hanover replies :

‘I think the insolence that you are obliged to endure is unbearable . . . The favour of Liselotte’—the pet name given to Madame

by her German relatives—‘is not worth much if she cannot get you treated differently.’

Six months later, in 1680, the much-tried Charles Louis passed where creditors cease to trouble, and ‘Liselotte’ poured out her grief and anger to her aunt of Hanover :

‘ You are happier than I ; for, although you lose as much, you are not at least obliged to live with those who, without doubt, have caused the death of his Highness the Elector by the trouble they gave him. That is what I find so hard to get over. You say, in your last precious letter, that you rejoice with me that I am near the King, with whom I like so much to be. Yes, I confess that before he persecuted papa to that point, I liked him well, and enjoyed being with him ; but since then it has been painful, I must confess, and so it will be for the rest of my life.’

After the deaths of her father and brother, Louis XIV. laid claim on her account to the Palatinate, and she had the anguish of hearing that fire and sword had been carried into the Rhineland, and her own beloved Heidelberg given for a prey. She never forgave Louvois the devastation of her country, and after his death she exulted with a savagery which made no part of her ordinary temper that ‘ he was doubtless burning terribly in the other world for all that he had caused to burn in this.’

She was faithful to her German tastes in a circle that thought them coarse and rustic. She never appreciated the delicate cookery of France, but the sausages of the Fatherland were her favourite breakfast on hunting mornings at Versailles. Hunting was one of her passions. In this she resembled her royal brother-in-law ; and here we are reminded of one of the paradoxes of her career, the friendship which—in spite of such outbursts as the one quoted above—linked her for so long to Louis XIV. It was not a relationship with which scandal could ever be busy, as in the case of her lovely predecessor. Charlotte Elizabeth could at no time of her life have been beautiful, and had none of the grace and tact by which such a woman as Madame de Maintenon may win an empire over the male heart that is more enduring than the power of beauty. She pleased the great King, one may imagine, by the very fact that she thought so little about pleasing. He was immensely entertained by the startling bluntness with which she said whatever happened to come into her mind. They had a bond of union in their common love of field sports, which formed the only relief to the intolerably deadening weight of Court ceremonial. Louis XIV. had to defend her on more than one occasion from the

unclean crew of parasites who tried to make mischief between her and her contemptible little fop of a husband, and her affection for him was partly based on gratitude. But one may say at least that in a society as petty, jealous, and spiteful as any that has flourished in modern times, these two souls—which, with all their faults, were moved by genuine honesty of purpose—found each other out, and rested in a real mutual confidence and regard.

One need not overlook the enormous shortcomings of Louis XIV. as a man and as a King to admit that in some important respects he 'tried to do his duty.' He was a hard-working Sovereign, both in the sphere of administration and in that social sphere which was, to his mind, no less important. So courteous that he never passed the poorest woman about the palace without lifting his hat, he carried polite consideration to the level of a fine art. In the way of courteous speech, there are few things nobler than his remark to the great Condé as the old hero was slowly ascending the great marble staircase at Versailles. Condé apologised for being so long in mounting the steps, at the top of which the King stood waiting. 'Ah, cousin,' Louis replied, 'one moves slowly when one is laden with laurels.' Generosity, a deep though far from enlightened sense of duty and responsibility, a splendid fortitude in adversity, there were these elements of grandeur at least in the character of Louis XIV.; and for these Madame gave him the friendship of her honest soul. When the great trouble of his life came upon him, and the adopted child of his old age, his grandson's wife, the young Duchess of Burgundy, was suddenly snatched away, she remained his faithful companion. 'Madame does not leave me,' said the lonely and broken old man. 'I can see that she is glad to be with me.'

Yet, in spite of this, Madame was a rebel and a truculent one at times. The strained relations caused by the treatment of her father have already been referred to. Then there was the famous episode of the marriage of her son, the Duke of Chartres, when the pride of the German Princess was wounded in its tenderest point by the proposal to wed him to his illegitimate cousin, the daughter of the King and Madame de Montespan. St. Simon's account of it has often been quoted; it is worth recalling once more:

'Madame was walking in the gallery; she was striding along, her handkerchief in her hand, weeping without restraint, speaking loud, and looking as much as possible like Ceres after she had been robbed of Proserpine. . . . At supper the King offered to

Madame all the dishes which were before him ; she refused them with a *brusquerie* which he endured to the end without relaxing his politeness and attention. Next day all the Court came to wait on Monsieur, Madame, and the Duke of Chartres ; but not a word was said. People contented themselves with making their obeisance, and all passed in perfect silence. Afterwards they went as usual to wait in the gallery till the King left the Council to go to Mass. Madame was there ; but when her son approached her, as he did every day, to kiss her hand, she gave him a box on the ear which could be heard some paces off, and which, in the presence of the Court, covered the poor Prince with confusion and filled the spectators, among whom I was, with immense astonishment.'

The course of events did not tend to reconcile Madame to the marriage, against which she protested so vigorously and so vainly. She continued to believe that her son, whose career as Regent, on the death of Louis XIV., supplied a well-known chapter to the *chronique scandaleuse* of Europe, might have been a different man if he had been more happily wived. 'I do not like *mésalliances*,' she said in her old age. 'The marriage of my son has spoiled my life.'

She was none the less a rebel in her attitude to the pietism which Madame de Maintenon, whom she cordially detested, was credited with having made the fashion. On her marriage she had, as a matter of course, renounced the Lutheran religion of her childhood ; but to the end of her life she retained not only the practice of Bible reading, which was not infrequent among the Gallican Catholics, but her love of the old Lutheran hymns. Her tone on theological subjects, however, accorded no better with the Augsburg Confession than with the Council of Trent. She admired the Englishman who, when he was asked at Fontainebleau, 'Are you a Huguenot ?' replied, 'No.' 'Catholic?'—'Still less.' 'Ah, you are a Lutheran?'—'Not at all.' 'What are you, then?'—'I will tell you. I have a little religion all to myself.'

'I, too,' she added, 'have a little religion all to myself.'

She could speak with respect and admiration of a man like Bossuet, but she had no patience with what she considered the ignorant and narrow religiosity of James II.

'I cannot imagine,' she wrote, *à propos* of this unfortunate Sovereign, 'why Kings imagine that they please God by praying. It is not for that that He has placed them on the throne ; it is that they may do good, exercise right and justice. This ought to

be the true devotion of Kings, and the priests should keep to their own work.'

She went regularly and ostentatiously to sleep during sermons, even when her favourite Bossuet was preaching. 'It is a great honour to sit next the King,' she wrote, 'but as soon as I go to sleep he pokes me with his elbow to wake me up.'

The following little story gives a pleasanter impression of her attitude than the hard irreverence of certain passages in her letters. It relates to Rousseau, the painter, when he was decorating the orangery at Versailles :

'He was high up on the scaffolding,' she writes. 'I thought I was alone in the gallery, and began to sing Psalms out loud. Hardly had I finished the first verse, when I heard someone descending in haste from the scaffolding. It was M. Rousseau, who threw himself at my feet. "Good heavens, Rousseau," I said, "what is the matter?" "Is it possible, Madame," said he, "that you still remember your Psalms and hymns? God bless you, and keep you in these good sentiments." He had tears in his eyes as he said this. Some days after this he went away—I never knew where; but, wherever he went, I wish him much joy and happiness. He is an excellent fresco painter, and much esteemed.'

She was a rebel, too, in her enthusiastic admiration for William III., the demon of the Court of Versailles. Her intercourse with James II. during his exile at St. Germain did not diminish this feeling. 'The more one sees the King,' she wrote, 'the more one learns about the Prince of Orange, and the more one excuses this latter and holds him worthy of esteem.' And she adds : 'It is a fact that an intelligence like his pleases me more than a handsome face.'

The contempt which she felt for James II. did not extend to his wife. One of the most heartfelt passages in the letters refers to the death of the sorely tried Mary of Modena :

'She is certainly in heaven. She never kept a *liard* for herself. She gave all to the poor, and maintained whole families. In her life she never said any harm of anyone; and if you wished to tell her any harm about such a one, she would say : 'If it is harm, please do not say it. I cannot bear stories which attack the reputation. She has supported her misfortunes with the greatest patience—a patience which was not the result of simple silliness' (the reference is obviously to the defunct King James). 'She was very intelligent, pleasing, and gracious.'

The deposed King and Queen of England are only two out of the great gallery of portraits in Madame's collection. The frankness with which she sketched all the personalities of the Court, for the amusement of her correspondents, is the more remarkable when we remember that she was well aware that the letters passed under the inspection of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. When one of her epistles had been delayed in transit, she commented on the incident as follows :

' They read the letters in M. de Louvois's time, just as they do now ; but they did at least forward them in reasonable time. Now that toad has taken the position the letters are delayed for an infinite time, as he does not know German and has to get them translated.'

The ' toad ' was, of course, the acting Foreign Minister, who had the pleasure, as Madame well knew, of reading these remarks and forwarding them.

One gains from Madame's correspondence some idea of the strange life—half public, half oddly domestic—which was led by the French Royal Family. What an abnormal existence was that of Louis XIV., who rose, dressed, said his prayers, had his meals, and went to bed in public ; always on duty, always acting the part of host to that immense gathering of gentlemen whom it was his pleasure to keep in constant attendance on himself, withdrawing them from their local responsibilities in a way that was in the end to prove the ruin of the old *régime* in France ! His only relaxation seems to have been hunting, and his only time of comparative seclusion the hours which he spent each day in his private study, or in Madame de Maintenon's apartments at work with his Ministers.

Madame gives us a parallel picture of one of her own evenings at home :

' There is nothing more tiresome. Monsieur [the Duke of Orleans] is playing *lansquenet* at a big table ; but I am not allowed to appear or to show myself at the game, for Monsieur has the superstition to imagine that I bring him bad luck when I am near him. Nevertheless he wishes me to be in the room, and all the old women who are not playing I have on my hands. This lasts from seven to ten, and makes me yawn dreadfully.'

The demon of dulness had, in fact, descended in full force on the once brilliant Court during the later days of the great King. Even Madame de Maintenon, who was supposed to have reached

the height of a woman's ambition, complained to one whom she trusted of the intolerable weariness of her life.

Things became worse when the charming Duchess of Burgundy was carried off by a sudden attack of malignant disease, and the young husband, who adored her, followed her within a few days to the grave. All hope of reform perished with the lost heir, the pupil of Fénelon. The Duke of Orleans, Madame's son, was already, what history was to prove him, a clever, kindly, ineffective voluptuary. He was mismatched with a foolish, self-indulgent wife, and their children grew up as might have been expected. Here and there in Madame's letters she dwells pathetically on her son's learning, his generosity, his accomplishments ; but her sober judgment spoke in the well-known fable in which she summed up the failure of his life. At his christening, she said, the fairies came each with her gift. At last the uninvited evil genius stepped forward, and, as she could not revoke any of the gifts already granted, she added the fatal proviso that he should never be able to use any one of them to his profit. This sinister twist of character, this weakness of will, neutralised the effect of all the fine and attractive qualities of Philip of Orleans, and made the period of the Regency a byword for shameless vice and national decadence.

The granddaughters of Madame appear, in her correspondence, as pronounced specimens of the 'smart set' of the day. They ate and drank to excess, and flaunted a disregard of decorum which was in flagrant contrast to the decent traditions of an earlier day, and horrified Madame's sedate daughter, the Duchess of Lorraine, when she came to Paris to spend a little time with her mother.

One of the comparatively innocent escapades of the young Princesses was that famous smoking party in a pavilion at Versailles, when they borrowed for the occasion the pipes of the gentlemen of the Swiss Guard.

It was for deeper and graver reasons than this that Madame wrote, within a few days of the death of her best-loved granddaughter, the warm-hearted, frank, wilful young Duchess of Berry :

' All her servants are easily consoled. I, too, my dear Louise—but for other reasons. I have learned since her death things that it would be impossible to write.'

At this time Louis XIV. was tried not only by repeated and cruel bereavements, but by defeats at Marlborough's hands, that threatened an inglorious close to his long and splendid reign.

‘The King contains himself and bears up well,’ Madame wrote, ‘but one sees what he suffers inwardly. We have more need than you can imagine that the King should live. If he died, everything would be topsy-turvy; for there is neither friendship nor confidence, even between the nearest relations. Of all the Royal Family the King is, after all, the one who has the best heart.’

She stood loyally to the last by her old friend; and even when she lost her lifelong confidante, the Duchess of Hanover, did her best to hide her grief, as the King could not bear to see sad faces about him. At last, in 1715, Louis was gathered to his fathers. He died bravely, and with a decorum so perfect as almost to rise to the heroic. ‘I thought it would be more difficult to die than this,’ he said, smiling, to Madame de Maintenon, who stood by his bedside. ‘I assure you it is not a great business; it is not hard at all.’

When the Duke of Orleans became Regent, those who expected to find his mother a prominent person in Court life thenceforth were undeceived. ‘I have taken the resolution,’ she wrote, ‘to meddle with nothing. France, between ourselves, has been too long governed by women. I do not wish to bring that reproach on my son.’

She lived, in fact, a life of dignified retirement from Court faction and intrigue. Always fond of solitude, she spent more and more of her time in her own rooms with her pet dogs and canaries, her collections of medals, her books, and her immense correspondence. Her later letters are tinged with the mellow philosophy of one who has observed and suffered much.

In the last days of 1701 she writes to someone who had referred to the changes wrought by time:

‘Never having been beautiful, I have not lost much. Then I see that those whom I have known beautiful are at this moment uglier than I. No soul alive would any more recognise Madame de la Vallière. Madame de Montespan’s face is covered with wrinkles, and her beautiful hair is white as snow.’

Is it not an eighteenth-century version of Villon’s lament, ‘Où sont les neiges d’antan?’

There must have been much homely strength of character and fidelity to early impressions about a woman who could write sincerely after a lifetime of Versailles:

‘I would rather see the earth and the trees than the most magnificent palaces, or a kitchen garden than the finest pleasure grounds ornamented with statues and fountains. A green meadow by the side of a stream pleases me more than the finest artificial

cascades. In a word, I like better what is natural than all that art and magnificence can produce and invent.'

The following passage has a special interest by reason of the reserve which Madame habitually maintained about her religious faith :

'I do not think that death is as horrible as you imagine. When, after having read and said my evening prayer, I get into bed I commend myself to God, body and soul. I ask pardon for my sins known and unknown, I plead for them the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I do not trouble about anything more, whatever may happen.'

In this calm and resolute spirit she drew near to the close of her long life—if not one of the most attractive, at any rate one of the most worthy, of the royal ladies who adorned the great age of the French monarchy. Even now, after so many years, one lays down her letters with the feeling of having been oneself a spectator of the scenes she describes so vividly. Once more the royal hunt sweeps down the long avenues of Fontainebleau Forest; once more we see the interminable card-party dragging along in the apartments of Madame, while Louis XIV. works at State papers in the room of the uncrowned Queen, who sits by the fireplace in her armchair. And we come back to the life of to-day with a feeling of real kindness, almost of personal friendship, towards the gallant, frank, affectionate creature who retained to the end, in an atmosphere of narrowness and convention, her spirit of toleration, her sense of justice, and her love of Nature.

DORA M. JONES.

Madame Félicie.

THERE was great excitement among the villagers when Monsieur and Madame Ribaud took up their residence in the little house just opposite the main entrance to the 'Mansion.' It was a modest little house enough, with whitewashed walls, and tiled roof, and about ten square yards of garden in front, divided from the road by a neat paling and an iron gate.

On the morning after the arrival of the newly wedded pair, Monsieur Ribaud, whose Christian name was Anatole, was observed to superintend with great satisfaction the affixing to the top bar of the gate aforesaid of a small brass plate, on which were inscribed the words 'Les Rosiers.' There were, in fact, two rather stunted rose-trees in the garden, besides several carnations, a patch of mignonette, and a whole row of sweet williams.

The neighbours did not understand the newfangled title; but when, a few days later, a card appeared in the parlour window bearing the legend—

MADAME FÉLICIE RIBAUD,
Robes et Confections,

they thought they knew all about it. Robes! Yes, they had heard that Madam Ribaud was a dressmaker; and confectionery—everyone knew that Mr. Ribaud was the 'Lard's' man-cook. Yet when the first adventurous little village urchin strayed into the new premises, requesting 'an 'aporth o' sweets,' there was no sign of any such commodity, and when he pointed to the placard in the window Madame Félicie shook her head and laughed till every little white tooth was plainly visible.

She was clearly a product of Paris, this little black-eyed slender woman, from the topmost curl of her pretty wavy hair to the buckle of her little high-heeled shoe.

Even the most finished French scholars of the aristocracy could scarcely understand her *grasseymement*; all sorts of odd little modern

words, not to be found even in the dictionary, escaped her when she was excited. She walked with a curious undulating gait, and carried herself as if she had been a queen. She looked altogether so completely out of place in this sleepy Dorset hamlet that the village people gaped as she passed, and the more initiated wondered how long she would endure her surroundings.

But Madame Félicie was always gay. She laughed as she scrubbed her doorstep of a morning, and tried to talk in her funny broken English to the postman and the milkboy; she sang over her housework, which she accomplished with a prodigious amount of energy, involving much throwing open of windows, and thumping of pillows, and shaking of dusters; she sang also as she worked her sewing-machine; she talked to her customers the prettiest little prattle in the world, imitating as nearly as possible their own somewhat Anglicised version of her native tongue. She considered this but polite. Thus she would say, with her head on one side, in reply to a query :

‘Oh, si, Madame, certainement j'aime la contrée.’ Or, again, she would recommend some particular shade of silk or ribbon, declaring vehemently ‘Cela sied si bien à la complexion de Madame.’

Somebody asked her once if she did not feel dull in the little quiet place, after spending her life in gay delightful Paris, and she became pensive for a moment or two, and then answered with a laugh and a shrug—and this time in English :

‘But no, Madame, I am not dull; one has one’s interior.’

The truth was that Madame Félicie was very much in love with her husband. He was fifteen years older than she—a big, stout, good-humoured looking man with a twinkling eye, and hair that, having been cut persistently *en brosse* since his earliest childhood, stood straight on end the moment he removed hat or cap. He was not beautiful to look at, this good Anatole, but then he had such a heart—it was impossible to conceive what a heart he had, Madame Félicie often declared.

Every day, when he set out for the great house, she accompanied him to the lodge gates, and parted from him there with a little kiss on either cheek; this ceremony necessitated her standing on tip-toe and his stooping quite a long way down; but it seemed highly satisfactory to both parties. And then she would trip away, turning at every three steps to wave her hand and call out ‘Au revoir, mon bon gros’; and he would nod in return and say ‘À ce soir, mon chou,’ until his big, rotund form was lost to view at the curve of the avenue.

And at night, no matter how dark it was or what might be the weather, Madame Félicie, after putting aside her machine, and sweeping up the hearth, and setting out such a cosy little supper-table, would pop on her scarlet *capuchon*, and run up the road very quickly, because it was late and there were sometimes rough people about, and hide in the shadow of the gateway until she saw her Anatole's lantern come bobbing along amid the clumps of evergreens ; on which she would clap her hands softly, and laugh under her breath, and dance up and down in the dark.

He was usually as punctual as clockwork ; but, one night, Madame Félicie watched and waited in vain for a full half-hour ; and it was on this occasion that the couple had their first—I may say their only—serious quarrel.

After waiting, with her cheek pressed against the unsympathetic gate till the church clock in the neighbouring town reminded her of the flight of time, the little woman took her way homewards, in very great dudgeon.

On entering she removed the supper-cloth, and got out her sewing-machine again, and was working hard with bent head and a red spot on each brown cheek when her husband arrived, breathless.

‘ My angel,’ he cried excitedly, ‘ thou didst well to come in. Thou must have been tired of waiting. I have been so occupied, but so occupied that I paid no attention to the time.’

‘ Really ?’ said Madame ; and went on working with feverish energy.

‘ Yes, indeed, my cherished-one, I have had an inspiration—I have composed a new dish. It is a triumph. Thou wilt see for thyself how delicious it is.’

But Madame’s lips remained pursed up, and her machine went *click—click—click—click* in an uncompromising fashion. He was still too much elated, however, with the result of his recent efforts to be as much impressed with this attitude as she desired.

‘ I have called it—this new dish—*Fraises en surprise*,’ he went on.

‘ Ah ?’ responded Madame coldly.

‘ Yes. Thou seest, my little one, the strawberries must be of the finest, those large red ones ; ripe, but not too ripe. I scoop out the interior, very delicately so as not to spoil the shape, and fill each one with a spoonful of strawberry cream iced just enough to give it solidity, but not enough to make it hard. Then I close the aperture with little rounds of angelica, cut out so as to resemble

the stalk of the fruit itself. The idea came to me all at once. Say, then, is it not an idea, my all-dear one ?

The machine slackened for a moment, and Madame looked round with a frigid smile : ' As to that, it is an idea like another.'

' An idea like another ! ' he retorted indignantly. ' But not at all ! It is an idea quite apart—entirely and absolutely new.'

Madame had resumed her work again, but her ironical tones sounded clearly above the clatter :

' Fraises à la crème—Crème aux fraises—Fraises en surprise—Surprise à la ——'

' Ça ! ' cried her lord, with mounting ire, ' What takes thee to-night ? '

Madame's little wheel again turned more slowly.

' I cannot say that the idea strikes me as absolutely novel.'

' Allons, allons, allons ! ' said Anatole, struggling to recover his good humour, ' she is angry, the little woman, because I kept her waiting so long. But when she has tasted the result of my labours she will own that I was right.'

Now, if the chef had not been so entirely carried away by his professional zeal he would have realised that this was not the way to make his *amende*. Félicie turned her back more squarely upon him and feigned to take no notice, while he opened a little basket and took out a little dish, and, finally bending over her, displayed to her resolutely unenthusiastic gaze six large red strawberries embedded in sugar foliage.

' Eat, my treasure ; try one only,' he cried jubilantly. ' It is then that thou will say it was worth while.'

' No, thank you,' said Félicie acidly. ' I have no wish to set my teeth on edge. *En surprise* did you say ? A very unpleasant surprise to most people, I should think.'

And she simulated a shiver.

' Ah, c'en est trop ! ' cried Monsieur in a voice of thunder. He was so angry that he threw the plate and its contents upon the floor and stamped upon them, so that, between broken china and crushed strawberries and cream, the new carpet suffered considerably.

Then Madame laid aside her stoicism, and declared with a little shriek that he was a monster ; and Monsieur, still hammering upon the fragments with his heel, vowed that she was *par trop maussade*, and that he could not and would not endure that all he held most sacred should be gibed at. Then Madame asked was it for this she had left her beloved Paris and her adored family ? And Monsieur

wanted to know where, then, was the reward of his devoted love and his many sacrifices ?

‘Sacrifices !’ ejaculated Félicie, whisking towards him. ‘What sacrifices, pray ?’

‘I have given up my liberty,’ said Anatole, more in sorrow than in anger now. ‘I have abandoned my happy, irresponsible *vie de garçon*. I have denied myself many things ; I could have travelled with Milord ; I could have gone to Scotland, a country which I have never seen, and which, I am assured on all sides, is most agreeable. But no. I agree to enter the service of Milord only on condition that I be not parted from my wife. By reason of this,’ said Monsieur, sinking his voice, ‘Milord, who is ever of the most considerate, is obliged to engage for Scotland with some *miserable cuisinière-job*.’

‘But of what use is it for you, then, to stay, since you no longer love your poor wife at all ?’ murmured Félicie.

On this Anatole was constrained to seize himself frantically by the hair and to endeavour to lift himself up by it. ‘I do not love her !’ he exclaimed tragically. ‘She says I do not love her !’

He looked appealingly at the sewing-machine. Madame’s gaze also reverted thither.

‘How can I believe that he loves me ?’ she said, with a sob, ‘when he keeps me waiting such a long, long time in the dark, and when he does not come home for supper, though he knows I am so hungry and will never begin without him, and—and—’—(here came a whole volley of little sobs)—‘when he *does* come he does not even *once* say he is sorry.’

‘My angel,’ cried Monsieur Anatole, ‘thou art telling little lies. Surely I said I was sorry.’

‘No, no, indeed thou didst not,’ said Félicie, still much injured. ‘Thou didst talk about thy new dish, and thou didst say that it was worth while waiting for it, and that I would see thou hadst been right.’

‘Oh, oh, oh !’ said Anatole, looking very knowing all at once. ‘And of course I should have said that I was wrong, mon pauvre petit chou-chou !’ He lifted aside the sewing-machine and stretched his arms across the table to her.

‘And yet thou seest, ma toute belle, I did not forget thee. Non ça, I was thinking of thee all the time, and picturing thy delight when thou didst see my strawberries.’

‘Oh, mon pauvre gros, and I said so many vilaines choses !’ Madame was leaning across the table now, and sobbing on his

shoulder. 'Tu m'en veux à présent,' she whispered. 'Bien sûr, tu m'en veux ?'

And though he assured her that he forgave her, Anatole had great difficulty in persuading her to forgive herself. But when she had cried a good deal more, and kissed him a great many times, she dried her eyes, and began to clear away the mess on the floor with a little inward sigh for her spoilt carpet ; and Anatole took off his coat, and put on his apron, and set to work to prepare supper. As a rule it was Félicie who did the home cooking, her husband declaring that he had enough of it at the great house. But to-night he pronounced tenderly that she was trop émotionnée to undertake any fresh labours, and that it should be his joy to minister to her. Therefore, when she had cleaned the carpet and washed her hands, she sat down in the armchair, and Anatole waited upon her as if she had been a duchess ; and though they were both very happy and very merry, Félicie was troubled every now and then in her heart of hearts with a recurring twinge of remorse.

The months passed, and Anatole achieved fresh triumphs, and Félicie secured many new customers, for not only was she considered to have a wonderful cut, but there was a certain piquant attraction about employing a real live Parisian dressmaker. The couple were as busy as bees and as thrifty. It was their intention to make a fortune as speedily as possible, in order that they might live in France for ever after.

At Christmas a new marvel set the villages agog. A baby arrived upon the scene—a ridiculous French baby, which was enveloped in swaddling clothes and was carried about on a pillow by a little black-eyed nurse, who wore a frilled cap and was about three feet high. The baby was very fat and very brown, and its eyes were very round, and the little dark down on its head already evinced a disposition to stand on end. 'Ma fille,' as Félicie proudly declared when the mite was about six weeks old ; 'c'est Anatole tout craché.' But Anatole, with a sentimental air, opined that the little one was the living image of her mother.

Spring came late that year, and Félicie was a long time in regaining her strength ; even when she got back to work again, though she declared herself perfectly well, and never would own to being in the least tired, her face had a pinched look amid all its happiness. She had more customers than ever, and when the small nurse had brought the baby in from its airing she was frequently obliged to lend a hand in basting a hem, or top-sewing a seam.

'Thou art too thin, mon chou-chou,' Anatole would say sometimes. 'Thou art running from morning till night. Thou givest thyself no rest.' But Madame was in the best of health, she said. It was by contrast with the little one that she appeared thin. The little one was fat enough.

May came, wet and windy. The Ribauds' home was much overshadowed by trees, and the branches dripped upon the roof, with a sound that would have been mournful had there not been so much cheerful bustle going on within that no one had time to notice it. And sometimes, after heavy rains, the river rose, and the flood came right under the garden gate; and then it was damp in the little house. But Félicie put on pattens and laughed, and said certainly Dorset was different from Paris; and Anatole dug a trench outside the paling, and was much commended by his spouse for cleverness and forethought.

The river, usually so beautiful in spring, with its limpid waters reflecting the blue sky and dappled clouds, and the varying greens of the trees whose branches dipped right into it, was, this year, dreary enough. The waters looked sullen, like the clouds overhead, and a brown deposit of mud was left upon its banks after the floods had subsided, and at sundown thick white mists rose from it, shrouding the bridge and the little town on the other side, and even the trees of the 'Lard's' park and the cattle huddled there. These evil mists crept even within the walls of *Les Rosiers*, so that, do what she might, Félicie found it difficult to keep the house warm; and when she went forth at night to meet her husband the dense vapour seemed to fill her lungs, and she often coughed long after they had returned together to the hearth.

'It is not safe for thee, my cherished-one,' said Anatole, 'to come out so late in weather such as this. Thou must stay at home until I come.'

'But the time seems so long,' said Félicie. 'I like you to think I am waiting for you there, and loving you.'

And come she would, mist or no mist, so that Anatole, between *attendrissement* and anxiety, was well-nigh distracted.

One day, however, he came back from the town, waving delightedly a small parcel.

'I have found it,' he cried. 'I have had an idea, my all-dear-one, which will satisfy thy heart and at the same time preserve thy precious health!'

He hastily undid the packet, and revealed a small lantern.

'Seest thou, my darling, is not this an invention? The glass

on one side is red, as thou observest, and on the other green. When the weather is too bad for thee to go out thou will stay at home, like a prudent little wife, and thou wilt fasten this outside our bedroom window with the red side turned outwards. Red, the colour of the heart—the colour of love ! And I will see it from the avenue, and I will think to myself as I hasten along, my adored Félicie is staying at home to please me. She is quite well and she loves me. Well, does not that idea smile to thee ?

The idea smiled so much to Félicie that she smiled, too, and turned about the little lantern admiringly.

‘ The green glass is very pretty also,’ she said. ‘ When shall I turn that outwards ? Green, the colour of jealousy ! Aha ! monsieur mon mari, if you dare to give me occasion—’

‘ Jamais de la vie,’ cried Anatole, with huge delight, and assuming a very knowing air which intimated that he would not for the world—but still, if he chose—h’m, h’m ! ‘ No, no, my little one,’ he went on more seriously, ‘ green signifies something prettier than jealousy ; it also signifies hope.’

‘ And when shall I tell thee to hope ? ’ said Madame, with her head on his shoulder.

‘ Dame, if the marmot had not already arrived ! ’ said Anatole reflectively. ‘ As it is we do not seem to want hope, do we ? But if, for example, thou wert suffering, and I had parted from thee in anxiety, then, to salute my return, thou wouldest hang out the lantern with the green side towards me so that I might know at once that thou wert better, and might hope that thou wouldest soon be tout-a-fait remise.’

‘ I see,’ said Madame contentedly. ‘ Thou thinkest of everything, mon bon gros.’

And so after that Madame Félicie duly hung out the little glimmering red light so that Anatole might see even from very, very far off that she was thinking of him and loving him. But notwithstanding this, when the time for his home-coming drew near, the naughty, disobedient little woman would often run out all the same, and hide in the embrasure of the wall, and pounce upon her lord from behind as he went hurrying down the road with his eyes upon the tiny glowing beacon.

‘ It was to make thee a surprise,’ she would say ; or ‘ I could not resist it, dost thou see ? ’ or, again, with a little naïve air of astonishment, ‘ But I wrapped up so warm, so warm, it could not possibly hurt me. I even covered up my mouth, as thou canst observe.’

And the said little mouth was immediately uncovered again that she might embrace her Anatole upon the highway.

It was no doubt one of these forbidden expeditions that wrought such havoc in the peaceful little 'interior.' On returning one night, though Félicie sat very close to the fire, and though her face was quite hot, her hands remained persistently cold, and she shivered incessantly. Anatole made her some lime-blossom tea, and covered her up very warm; indeed, he spent the entire night, the good fellow, in covering her up, and tucking her in all round, and imploring her to perspire. But she did not perspire, and neither did she sleep; she coughed instead, a nasty little hacking cough. At daybreak the chef ran for the doctor—just for a precaution, he told Félicie, who was indeed very anxious to get up and prepare breakfast. But when the doctor came he looked grave. It was pneumonia, and a very serious case, he said; but Madame Ribaud was young, and with care— He would look in again in the evening, and meanwhile prescribed warmth, absolute quiet, and the closest attention to his directions. He would tell the district nurse to call.

'It is I who will nurse her,' said Anatole fiercely.

And so, all at once, tragedy came to Les Rosiers, where hitherto an idyll of true love had reigned undisturbed. When Jeannette, swaying the baby from side to side on its frilled pillow, paused to listen outside the door of the sick-room, she could hear Madame Félicie's hurried breathing, and Monsieur Anatole's stealthy tread as he moved about within. The baby, resenting, no doubt, the changes in its hitherto unchequered existence, cried fretfully from time to time; and once Félicie showed uneasiness.

Anatole darted from the room, his eyes aflame.

'Carry her away,' he cried in a hoarse whisper; 'carry her out of hearing at least, if you have not the sense to stop her.'

'But, m'sieur, the poor little one—'

'My wife must not be disturbed, I say. My God, it is enough to drive one mad!'

The little house was very silent after this, and Félicie dozed fitfully and feverishly, and Anatole tried to smile whenever she opened her eyes.

Once, after taking her medicine, she remained looking at him with a curious expression.

'I have been thinking, mon bon gros—I do not sleep all the time, thou knowest—I have been thinking . . . that day when we quarrelled.'

‘ We never quarrelled,’ said Anatole huskily.

‘ Oh, si—tu sais . . . la grande querelle—les fraises en surprise, tu sais ? ’

Anatole nodded ; he wanted to speak, but somehow he could not.

‘ I have been thinking,’ said Madame, raising one little burning hand to stroke his sleeve, ‘ how stupid I was not to taste them. J’étais très maussade, hein ? Thou didst say I was maussade.’

‘ No, no, never—never anything but adorable.’

And Anatole caught the little hand in his, and kissed it.

‘ I should so like to taste them now,’ said Félicie ; ‘ they must be so good, the strawberries and the ice. How delicious to feel the ice upon one’s tongue ! But there are no strawberries, now.’

‘ Yes, there are strawberries,’ cried the chef eagerly ; ‘ there are forced strawberries in the hothouses yonder at the château. The gardener would give me some in a minute. Couldst thou eat them, ma mignonne ? I could soon prepare them.’

Félicie’s thick eyelashes were beginning to droop, but with an effort she opened her eyes wide.

‘ Yes, yes, I would like it, I would indeed. I have here on the heart, dost thou see, that I refused to taste thy invention. Besides,’ she added, seeing him about to protest, ‘ I have a longing for them—I know they must be so good.’

‘ I shall be back in an hour,’ cried Anatole joyfully. ‘ After all,’ he said to himself as he descended the stairs, ‘ sometimes these sick fancies are instinctive. Who knows ? The coolness of the fruit might lessen the fever, and cream is certainly nourishing.’

His next-door neighbour agreed to sit with Félicie till his return ; she had just taken her medicine and would not be likely to want anything for some little time. He set off as fast as his legs could carry him to the Park. Never did the legs of a stout man cover the ground more quickly ; in despite of which he was longer in carrying out his purpose than he had anticipated. He was obliged to prepare the dish at the mansion, not having the necessary appliances at home. It was dusk when he descended the avenue again, carefully carrying the result of his labours ; and as he came in sight of home he instinctively raised his eyes, and saw a little green light twinkling from the upper window. Green, the colour of hope ! Félicie had remembered his words. Yet at sight of the dancing gleam his heart went down, down, to the lowest depths.

In a few minutes he was in her room, and the neighbour, nodding good-naturedly, rose and withdrew.

‘ See, I have brought thee the strawberries,’ said Anatole, in a strangled voice.

Félicie opened her eyes and smiled.

‘ Thou must feed me,’ she said feebly.

With renewed hope he uncovered his little dish and cut off the tip of the largest strawberry with a silver spoon. ‘ Taste,’ he said eagerly.

He bent over her, poising the spoon delicately, and she advanced her poor parched lips, and closed her eyes in token of ecstacy.

‘ Déli-cieux !’ said Madame Félicie.

But when he offered her another mouthful she motioned the spoon away with a faint smile and a little shake of the head.

And then Anatole rushed blindly from the room, and clattered downstairs, almost overturning the good woman from next door, who was fastening her shawl at the foot.

‘ Well, to be sure,’ cried she indignantly, ‘ whatever is the man thinking about ? Makin’ so much noise as a regiment, and his missus that ill——’

‘ Animal !’ cried Anatole inarticulately, ‘ I go that she not see me cry !’

And he rushed into the little parlour, and shut the door.

A few minutes later he emerged, with red eyes, to meet the doctor ; and the doctor was very kind, and said while there was life there was hope.

A little later that night, as Anatole was sitting by her bedside holding one small hand in his—the small fevered hand with its roughened forefinger—she moved her head upon the pillow, so that she could see him more plainly.

‘ Mon bon gros, I think of something.’

‘ Of what, then, my all-dear ?’

‘ If I die thou wilt be very lonely.’

‘ Ah, my little angel, do not speak of such things ! If thou wert to die I would surely die too.’

‘ Thou wouldest wish to die, I know, mon ami ; but thou must not die—there is the little one !’

‘ There is the little one,’ repeated Anatole, in muffled tones.

‘ Yes, I have been thinking—thou wilt be very lonely, my poor Anatole, and I do not want to be selfish—I—I want thee to be happy. But if thou dost marry again—the little one will have a stepmother !’

And as she faltered the last words her unnaturally bright eyes grew suddenly dim.

And though poor Anatole knew very well that he could no longer restrain his tears it did not seem worth while to run away this time ; he rolled his poor face in the pillow instead, and cried, and cried, and said, 'Never, never, never,' until he could no longer say anything at all.

And then Félicie moved her head yet a little nearer until her cheek rested upon his stiff hair, and said 'Mon bon gros,' for the last time.

Two melancholy little processions passed through the gates of Les Rosiers within a few weeks of each other. The first went slowly upwards to the churchyard on the other side of the Park ; the second proceeded to the railway station—Monsieur Anatole and the baby, and the nurse, and all the little household gods. Les Rosiers remained deserted without any remnant of its former self, except the tiny brass plate which no one thought it worth while to remove from the gate.

Soon the forsaken house was deprived of its very name, and became henceforth known as 'Sibley's,' a large and noisy family of that name having taken possession of it. Cabbages were grown in the garden-plot, and a clothes-line was slung from a corner of the railing to the window-staple where Félicie used to hang her lantern.

But the rose-trees remained, and one day, five or six years later, a stout man, holding a brown paper parcel in one hand, and with the other leading a little girl, was observed to pause and earnestly consider them. And presently, loosing the child's hand, he stretched out a hasty arm and picked a leaf from each, and kissed them, and hid them in his bosom.

It was not until after he had gone that the village folk identified 'Mossoo.' His hair had grown quite grey, they said, but still they knew the back of him ; and the little maid—yes, now they came to think of it, anyone could tell she was poor Madam's child. The very turn of her head in that little red hood, and the very walk.

One or two, more curious than the rest, followed the big man from afar, and saw him presently turn in at the churchyard gate, and watched as he knelt by Madame's grave. They saw him stoop and kiss the grass, and then gather a handful of it, which he hid away, like the rose-leaves, in his bosom. And then he unfastened his parcel and laid, just at her feet, such a beautiful big wreath ; and then, lifting up the child, he made her kiss the cross at the head of the grave, and carried her away, wiping his eyes as he went.

The watchers kept out of sight till he departed, and then went forward to examine the wreath. It was a large one, such as they had never seen, all made of yellow everlasting flowers, and there was something written on it that they could not make out.

But these were the words ;

‘*A ma bien-aimée.*’

M. E. FRANCIS.

Feathered Foragers.

IN the black roll of the Highland keeper the golden eagle heads and ennobles the list of 'vermin.' Terribly destructive he is, the king of the winged ravagers, and when forests and moors rose to fancy rents he was ruthlessly proscribed. Sir William Jardine, that accurate naturalist, tells us that in three years, in the 'thirties, in the single county of Sutherland, 220 eagles were shot or trapped. The numbers of the victims were the best justification of the slaughter, for the eagles did infinite harm and could be credited with little good. The peregrine may be more ruthless, for he will strike from sheer love of the game ; but it was argued in his favour that he checked disease by flying at the ailing members of a brood—although that is more than questionable. No such plea could be urged for the eagle ; but at least he makes his hunting a pure matter of business. In satisfying his own appetite and that of the ravenous eaglets in the breeding time, he was always abroad and always active. It was fortunate, perhaps, that though loving the excitements of the chase and preferring fresh-killed meat, he has no objection to carrion. When he came on the carcass of a drowned sheep he would gorge like a boa-constrictor, to be paralysed for a day or two both in flight and brain power ; or he would follow on the track of the wounded deer, stooping at the head, striking home with his beak, fixing his talons in the shoulders, and blinding the staggering brute with the death shadow of flapping wings. When gorged, the forester with his terriers or the shepherd with his collies would take him at an advantage ; with filmy eyes, and too heavily weighted to rise, he would fall a victim to a single stroke of the stick. But happily, when the eagle was disappearing, and, indeed, in a fair way of being extirpated, there were owners of vast tracts of forest who came to regard him from the picturesque point of view. Peremptory orders were issued for the preservation of eagles ; and in Athol, in Strathconon, in Stack, and other great

forests, for many years they have found a sanctuary. The golden eagles have been getting up again, but you can't keep them near home by hand feeding, like pheasants. Princes of the Powers of the air, they range far and near for their prey, and think nothing of a flight of some fifty miles or so. When Evan Dhu hoped to show his skill as a marksman, the eagle he missed was on his way from the glens of Glennaquoich to fetch an afternoon's prey from the Braes of Bradwardine. The flight is deceptive as it is strong. Each slow stroke of the pinions sends him forward with the effortless glide of the skater who has stored up reserves of velocity. See a pair circling high overhead, when intruders on the wastes threaten the eyrie they have good reason for deeming impregnable. It is the poetry, or rather the passion, of aeronautic action. As striking is their fashion of seizing the victim, with the lamb or the fawn it is a swift, straight stoop, like the perpendicular drop of the osprey when plunging on a trout in the loch. But with winged game it is a swooping circle, a poise, and then the swift, slantidicular rush. Anything light, like a grouse or ptarmigan snatched up in the air, is borne away to some rocky perch to be devoured at leisure. But when the eagle goes in for feasting on the carcass of drowned sheep or death-stricken deer, it is remarkable that, in restless activity, he never folds his pinions. They keep steadily flapping as he tears his way to the entrails. Once I chanced to assist from an ambush at one of those Highland banquets, and had opportunity of noting the mortal terror the king of the clouds inspired in his subjects. Crawling up a burn, on the outlook for cackling mallards, I was brought to a pause by the croaking of ravens and the hoarse clamour of carrion crows. Peeping cautiously through a heather bush, I saw a mixed company beginning operations upon a drowned wether, which they seemed to have just discovered. Simultaneously they raised their heads—before I did. Then there was the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and down dropped an eagle. As he stalked deliberately to the stranded sheep, all the others scattered, and, voraciously jealous as they had been the moment before, not a bird interfered till the monarch was satiated. It was ludicrous to see their disgusted expression as they hopped around, occasionally venting their irritation on each other with savage pecks, but keeping well out of reach of the arch enemy. Indeed, the eagle was a formidable figure, with the fierce yellow lustre of the glittering eyes, as he cast malignant glances about, while he tore away at wool and skin.

On another occasion I saw an eagle even nearer, though it was

but a spectre-like glimpse; but few can boast so close an experience. We were shooting ptarmigan on one of the highest of the Ross-shire hills, when we were suddenly enveloped in thick driving mist. I was looking to my steps on a paving of loose boulders, when the wing of an eagle actually fanned my cheek. The great bird was at least as much taken aback as myself, and vanished in the gloom with piercing screams.

Should he escape gun, trap, and poison, the eagle is believed to live to extreme old age. Highland tradition and superstition credit him with marvellous longevity. Certain it is that when he falls upon years no creature is more to be pitied, for his lot is sadly changed. Eyes and pinions fail him together, and he probably dies of sheer starvation. In exceptionally severe winters even eagles in the prime of their vigour are reduced to great straits. The whole Highland country is buried deep in snow, and hares and ptarmigan, having put on their winter coats, are barely to be distinguished from the drifts. Then eagles, reduced to extremities, have been known to attack the starving deer, who are in equally lamentable case. After a protracted snowfall, when crippled with starvation and reduced to skeletons, they have been approached within easy gunshot, like the partridges who gather to the rick-yard.

Keepers are not so hard upon eagles as they once were; indeed, many now take a pride in protecting them, partly, perhaps, from some touch of sentiment, but chiefly because eagles keep down the mountain hares, which bother the dogs and are regarded as unmitigated nuisances. Their worst enemies now are the naturalists, who bribe the bird-stuffers, and the egg-collectors, who will give a guinea for an egg; nor is the egg dear at the money, considering the risk involved in getting it. Harrying an eyrie is, indeed, a case of 'bird-nesting extraordinary.' Seldom accessible from below, it must generally be assailed from above. The adventurer, slung from a rope, is swinging in mid-air, and it is a chance if the violent oscillations of the pendulum land him on the ledge before the nest that is slippery with the miscellaneous *débris* of the larder. Should there be nestlings, the parents are screaming overhead—enough of itself to shake the nerves, even if they do not actually assail the assailant. The nest is constructed on a colossal scale, with an interweaving of sticks. Sometimes there are veritable pieces of timber, which show the strength of the bird, for often in a treeless forest the materials must have been fetched from afar. There are seldom more than a couple of eggs, of a dull white, with specks or splashes of pink. And in the olden time, when the balance of

Nature was still undisturbed, it was well that the multiplication of the race was so limited. Had their broods been numerous as those of the red or black grouse, they must have made a clean sweep of the hills. It may have been a fair feud for the hill ranger or shepherd to kill the eagle, but I am always sorry for him when I see him in captivity. Moreover, the exhibition is a cruel futility. Moping on his perch under the gratings of the cage at the 'Zoological,' he shows as little of his native spirit and animation as the stuffed specimens in the museum. As hillsick as his moping neighbour the chamois, gazing wistfully at the clouded sun, towards which he will never soar again, he pines away with chronic liver complaint.

I feel no such sympathy for the caged raven. In the first place, being sullen of mood and naturally of a sombre temperament, he takes confinement more philosophically. Then, if he did suffer keenly, I could find it in my heart to rejoice at it. He is a sublimation of the vilest qualities of the grey crow, the incarnation of cowardly ferocity. There are passion and life in the cry of the eagle, but the croak of the raven is the intoning of a death-dirge. His favourite haunt is in the darkness of some lonely glen; and his ill-omened voice, chiming in with the grumble of the shrunken torrent, aggravates the depression that insensibly steals over you in the shadows of falling night. Belated after a long and weary stalk, you cannot help reflecting on the fate that might have befallen you had you broken a leg or sprained an ankle. Till absolutely helpless you would be tolerably safe, for the raven seldom attacks till his victim is in the death throes, and he has a morbid predilection for corpses. But he will gloat over the death agonies with hungry impatience, walking round and round, drawing nearer and nearer, and noting all the signs of approaching dissolution. Of man, even when prostrated, he has some instinctive dread, but he knows that the dying sheep or deer is powerless. Then he strikes at the eye—his favourite morsel—and what Christopher North calls his 'cut and thrust beak' is admirably fitted for the purpose of an autopsy. It is strange, when there is a real treasure-trove of carrion, how many ravens—almost always by the couple—will gather quickly to the feast. For, as a rule, they are solitary birds, or, at least, each pair keeps lonely house, foraging some district which seems abandoned to them by tacit consent. Probably their fashion of congregating may be ascribed to the same cause which attracts African vultures and the king storks to a fresh-killed piece of game, when the moment before the clear sky

had been apparently speckless. One couple keeps a watch on the movements of another, and answers to the croak of irrepressible exultation. Scent, too, may have something to do with it, though that explanation is scarcely plausible. Yet it is a fact that though the raven's nostrils are thickly feathered, the keenness of scent surpasses that of the fox, whom the bird rivals in sly audacity and cunning.

Ravens are indefatigable ravagers of the moors. They nest in March, and their voracious broods are hatched early in April. Thenceforth there is no peace for the game, who breed later; and it is no wonder that the keeper wages unsparing war against them. They mark each movement of grouse or grey hen, ready to drop on the nest when she leaves the eggs. When the young birds have chipped the shell, the cover of the heather is a slight protection. Generally, as I said, the ravens breed in some rocky solitude where winged game is scarce, and their young must sometimes be on short commons. But later in the season the family often migrates to moors where the sportsman expects the very cream of the shooting. Many a good keeper has been unjustly abused for sending optimistic reports to the south which have been sadly falsified on the Twelfth. Frequently unexpected rains may be answerable for that, but I believe that often much of the blame should rest on the swarthy shoulders of the ravens and hooded crows.

The eagle is a pitiable object in confinement. The raven, on the contrary, is perhaps seen to most advantage when uncaged, but half-domesticated and a prisoner at large. Of course, as Macaulay remarked of Mr. Montgomery's Satan, old habits are not easily eradicated, and he still retains his predatory and felonious instincts. But with his Tartuffe airs of solemn hypocrisy, if he is a thief by habit and repute, he is a most amusing one. Even his felonies are condoned when he tampers with plate or jewellery, carrying off spoons and rings to his private repositories. Dickens, with his Bohemian sympathies, was never more humorous than when he bemoaned the demise of the first of his raven pets, the prototype of Grip, in 'Barnaby Rudge.' It will be remembered that the departed on his death-bed had forebodings of his approaching dissolution, and was troubled as to the disposal of his little property, consisting chiefly of stolen halfpence, invested in the back garden. The death was characteristically due to a surfeit of stolen white paint, and was delicately broken to Dickens by the medical attendant of the deceased, who 'prepared me by the remark that "a jolly queer start had taken place."

Magpies and jackdaws have the same thieving propensities

and as pets are as troublesome, though even more entertaining. Both are admirable mimics of sounds, and born actors, and not unfrequently are accomplished ventriloquists. The magpie in captivity is always on the hop, with head on one side, and an overdone air of innocence which never deceives those who know him best. In the woods he is for ever flitting through the trees, with the playful jerk of the tail which seems to show contempt of the persecutors he outwits. Though he is one of the most beautiful of British birds, with the rich colours of back and breast contrasting the brilliant black and white of the tail, very naturally the keepers are down upon him. Like all his tribe, he doats upon eggs, and in the spring-time he regularly goes bird-nesting. No village boy has so sharp an eye or is half so well acquainted with the secretive instincts of birds, from pheasant and partridge to willow wrens and sedge-warblers. About the only thing to be said in his favour is that where wood pigeons multiply he thins their numbers. Laying a couple of white eggs on a transparent fabric of slight lattice-work, the cushats could not have a more dangerous neighbour. If he has overlooked the eggs, he keeps an eye on the young. Frederick St. John, a close observer, comments on his careful table arrangements, declaring that he always waits till the nurslings are 'fit for the table.' The magpie is shy of traps as of guns, yet, if the snare be well concealed, eggs are an almost irresistible lure. He takes excellent care of himself, and, though the keepers keep him down, is never likely to be extirpated; and we should be sorry to miss the grating scream, an agreeable though harsh tenor to the droning whir-rr of the nightjar, for he is always most vociferous in the gloaming, when he can indulge in greater liberties. As a boy I remember no more thrilling sensation in the woods than the discovery of a magpie's nest. Though, indeed, there is little attempt at concealment; for it rather challenges observation, though it tests the pluck of the climber. It is a huge structure of sticks, elaborately roofed in, but perched, in most cases, in a perilously inaccessible position.

The jay, in the glow of colours that glance in the sun, rivals, if it does not surpass, the magpie. Seldom seen now in many southern districts, it is still common enough in the woodlands of Kent and Sussex. You hear the scream of alarm as the beaters enter a covert; you catch a glimpse of the flash of the feathers as it shoots across a glade. It loves the dense undergrowth and tangled 'short cut,' where the saplings are cut septennially for hop poles. Its nest, on a smaller scale, resembles that of the magpie, though the roof is dispensed with. Like the useful and much-calumniated owl, it

deserves not only mercy, but protection from the keepers. It may pick up a few eggs at an odd time, but it is not a hardened or an inveterate egg-stealer. And it is a better guard to the coverts than any number of watchers or bell wires, for it sounds a warning when any trespasser sets foot in them. Even a fox can never lie up for a quiet snooze among the brambles or bracken if a jay is on the look-out. It will keep up a continuous clamour, till Reynard changes his snug quarters in disgust or despair.

Magpies and jays shun human company, but the jackdaw makes himself at home anywhere and everywhere. So the keeper knows to his cost, when a daw has domiciled himself within stoop of the pheasant nursery. How gladly then would the watcher, who wastes his curses, have him anathematised with bell, book, and candle, like the sacrilegious church robber immortalised in the *Ingoldsby Legends*! He nests indifferently in ruins, churches, cliffs, and the holes in hollow trees. Where he has the choice, his first idea is to have a poultry yard or pheasant preserve handy. He is really a rook on a smaller scale, scarce to be distinguished save for the size and some tinting of the plumage. Like the rook, he is gregarious, loves to settle in colonies, and sticks year after year to the same nesting-place. In autumn and winter he takes to the fields with the rooks, mingling indiscriminately with their flocks. Of all the egg thieves and chicken snatchers he is the most audacious, if not the most destructive. The sparrow-hawk trusts to dash, making a swift stoop on the coops, and is gone like a flash of greased lightning. The daw is seldom foolhardy or precipitate; he waits till the watcher's back is turned, for being ever on the spot he does not trouble to hurry.

If the daw is a miniature rook, the crow is a feebler raven. In his campaigning qualities he is as the light Uhlan to the heavy dragoon. Always scouting and keeping a bright look-out, nothing escapes his observation. In fact, his keenness overreaches itself, for he can never keep a discovery to himself. His cry of joyful surprise when he sights a prize calls all his *confrères* to the feast, with any of the ravens who may be within hearing. Crows are a universal pest, but naturalists are much puzzled as to the several species. There is a standing confusion between carrion crow and hooded crow; naturalists tell us that their internal arrangements are identical, but the feathering varies according to sex and age. The fact is that though their habits differ—for the carrion crow is gregarious, which the other is not—they are much in the habit of intermarrying, so the breeds get mixed. The one indisputable

point is that they are equally noxious. Preferring carrion, they devour anything, and are, of course, among the most mischievous of the egg-hunters. They are partial to fish, and when the otter leaves a salmon on the bank, with a single bite out of the shoulder, the crows clear the table, leaving nothing but the backbone. In the season they resort to the seaside, like their betters, where they surfeit on any garbage stranded by the tide, or pick up a living from the shellfish. When puzzled by the hardness of the shell, they show a sagacity which is rather reason than instinct. Lord Cockburn tells us in his 'Memorials,' that at Caroline Park, near Edinburgh, tenanted first by Lord John Scott, and afterwards by Sir John McNeill, they were seen to soar into the air with the cockles, to shiver the shells on the rocks below. The character of these marauders is so infamous that lapwings and gulls make common cause against them, mobbing and even buffeting them when they come near the nesting-places. I remember paying a visit to a settlement of the black-headed gulls, which covered, as with a snowy sheet smeared over with inkstains, a couple of acres of rushy swamp. The gulls were not unused to visitors, and did not disturb themselves at my approach. But suddenly the air was darkened with screaming clouds, swirling and thickening towards a centre, when out of them emerged a panic-stricken crow, winging his flight to a neighbouring fir wood, and, with the merciless buffeting he received on all hands, for once I rather felt for the grey-backed marauder. On the moors the plague has been greatly abated by the use of strychnine. You take a hill hare or rabbit, slit the eye, and introduce the poison. Naturally there is some danger that dogs will come to grief, and as the crows will drag suspended bait to the ground, it is difficult to keep it out of the dogs' way. But as it happens, a dog, should he worry a dead rabbit, will seldom touch the head, whereas the crow commences with pecking at the eye. And the strychnine acts so surely and quickly that the crows lie strewed in the immediate neighbourhood, and you have the satisfaction of seeing how well the plan has worked. As for rooks, it is quite impossible to deal with them; and yet they are as eager after eggs as any of their cousins. If you go out with the keeper, gathering pheasant eggs in spring—and there is no more amusing form of bird-nesting—you will see them following, well out of gunshot and keeping unwinking eyes on every movement. They will certainly search the spot where you stoop. Better to take half a nestful than wait; otherwise you will find a pitiful scattering of broken shells.

The raven led us into such low company as the scavenger crows. We rise again with the osprey or fishing eagle, the victim of an exterminating war, though dear to all lovers of the picturesque. It is sad to think that two of the best of northern sportsmen and naturalists set an evil example. Colquhoun actually boasts of raids upon the ospreys who bred on the islands of Loch Lomond and in the old castle of Monteith; and St. John, in his 'Tour in Sutherland,' ruthlessly robbed the nests, and in skulking ambush took shameful advantage of ardent parental affections among the insular eyries of the lonely lochs. Happily now some of the great landowners have taken the birds under their protection; and in some impregnable positions, in the wilds of the western coast, they have always defied their enemies. So it is not often that one has a chance of watching the fishing of the osprey; but nothing in nature is more noteworthy or more wonderful. Poised in the air, the piercing eye must detect the trout fathoms below the surface; the drop is as the sheer descent of a heavy stone, and almost invariably the bird emerges with the trout in the talons. Then, if there are no nurslings in the nest, he carries it to the nearest rock and devours it at leisure. The nest is as solidly constructed of sticks as that of the golden eagle, though more warmly padded with rushes and grasses.

The osprey is seldom to be seen now, but the peregrine falcon is more common than is generally believed. There are few extensive forests of savage character which are not frequented by one or two pairs. But the peregrine, with his insatiable appetite and his lust for blood, knows better than to make a show of himself. He is a good friend to the deer-stalker, for he thins the grouse. It has been argued that he cannot be very destructive to feathered game, because they find cover in the heather when they see him abroad. The fact is that he sits ever watchful on some rocky eminence, and only launches into the air when the covey is on the wing. See him hawking the golden plover or lapwings on the moors, and mark the swiftness of the stoop and the certainty of the death-stroke! Often he makes his eyrie on some lofty sea-cliff, and then the plover and shore-haunting fowl have lively times of it. In the old hawking days the peregrines from the Hebrides, the Welsh cliffs, or the Isle of Man fetched fancy prices when coin was scarce. Nor was it wonderful, for not even the little sparrow-hawk is so imbued with the passion of the chase; for the peregrine, in his thirst for blood, will kill for sheer wantonness. Striking with the wing as well as with beak or singles, he will drop the grouse or black game, *en passant*,

without one glance over the shoulder. There is sinister cruelty in the fiery eye; and when the female has chanced to be widowed there is many a fierce love-fight for the lady's good graces.

When the peregrine puts on the pace, it is tremendous; it almost beats that of the old blackcock. But for grace of aerial motion the kite is *facile princeps*. So he got his Saxon name of 'the glede,' which is eloquently expressive. Rising in sweeping circles on seemingly motionless wing, he steers by imperceptible action of the tail, till dwarfed to a speck in the sky or lost to sight altogether. Never is there the slightest appearance of effort. As to how far he harms game, authorities hold very opposite opinions. I myself believe that he feeds chiefly on carrion and reptiles. The truth is that, like the eagle, he is no ways particular as to his fare, and his voracity involves him in justifiable suspicion. 'Greedy as a gled' was an old Scottish byword. Like all the hawks, he is a nuisance in the hatching time, as the keepers of the last generation knew to their cost—for nowadays the kite is a rare apparition. And though he could not dive for his prey, he was devoted to trout, like the osprey. When traps were set—and he was never shy of them—a trout or a cut of salmon was a sure bait.

The buzzard is the largest of the tribe, bigger even than the peregrine, incorrigibly lazy, and consequently corpulent. He will never build for himself if he can help it, but takes up his quarters in the deserted residence of crow or magpie. He is cowardly, too, and puts up with any amount of bullying and buffeting from small birds. Yet the impostor makes a fine appearance in the air, and the flight is scarcely less imposing than that of the kite. The buzzard may be almost harmless, except when purveying for the young; but of very different temperament is the tiny sparrow-hawk, the incarnation of daring, dash, and impudence. The polecat of the air, it is as persistent in its sanguinary attentions to any locality that attracts it. Like the jackdaw, when it has found out the pheasant coop it never relaxes its attentions. The keeper may be nodding or gone to dinner, but the sparrow-hawk is ever wide awake. It is a deadly and standing terror in the purlieus of the farmyard. A shadow shoots across the sun, and there is a general concert of alarm. Geese are gabbling, brood hens are clucking, and ducks are quacking as they hustle their ducklings into the pond. I have seen a sparrow-hawk stoop on a farmyard while a sale of cattle was going forward, to snatch a pigeon off the roof, leaving a trail of feathers behind. Enormously strong, even the smaller male will carry a bird heavier than himself to a con-

siderable distance. But he seldom carries it far ; his powers of appetite have their limits, and, as he infallibly returns to the 'kill,' you can take your revenge. The patience of the ambushed gunner will be rewarded, or if you surround the 'kill' with traps he is pretty sure to put his foot in one of them.

The hen harrier and the little merlin are equally mischievous. The hen harrier hunts the fields and hedges on the methodical system of a sagacious old pointer ; and the merlin, hunting like the hen harrier in couples, is the more dangerous in that it makes its nest in the heather among the grouse.

A word may be said by way of postscript about the owls, much calumniated, like the nightjar, because their looks are sinister and their deeds are of the darkness. I believe the superstitious keeper detests the owls because of their eerie screeching and wailing. In reality they are joyous birds, and the hooting is the expression of serene contentment. When other creatures, except the field prowlers, are buried in sleep, the owl wakes up to full activity. He is the invaluable friend of the farmer and forester, for he is the deadly enemy of rats and mice. No animal has quicker sense of hearing than the field mouse ; he listens for the faintest rustle of roving weasel or stoat, but against the silky flight of the owl he is helpless. On pinions lined with down, with expanding eyes that blaze like carriage-lamps in the dark, the owl, with sharper ears than his own, is literally down upon him before he has a suspicion. Nor is there anything in nature more tenacious than the clutch of the owl's claws. The brown or tawny owl and the white or barn owl have their different methods of hunting. The brown owl prefers to take up a position on a tree, listening and looking out for anything moving. He it is who does most of the hooting. The barn owl, on the contrary, goes as silently about his work as any night poacher ; how often has one started, in getting over a stile, when he came flitting ghost-like over the shoulder, a shadowy spectre ! Nothing disgusts me more than to see that useful and unobtrusive friend of man ignominiously gibbeted on the keeper's tree among miscreants of the darkest dye. Yet till he changes his habits and becomes a bird of the day, he will never rid himself of his evil reputation. I remember a shoot in the north, when a couple of tawny owls were conspicuous in the day's collection. An old keeper, reduced to keeping a turnpike, gave them a malevolent kick, with the elegy, expressive of dread and detestation : ' Ay, anyhow ye're a good riddance ; ye'll never any more disturb honest folks in their beds wi' yer yowling ! '

ALEXANDER INNES SHAND.

At the Sign of the Ship.

THE hoax is usually a rather cruel and stupid form of the practical joke ; the fun turns on the discomfiture of another person, and on the hoaxter's sudden sense of superiority. Hobbes, it is usually said, recognised in these factors the origins of mirth, and no doubt early man must have laughed consumedly when he wakened up an enemy with a stone spear-point. The sense of superiority is the essence of the jest. Lately, someone told me that as I walked in the street I was observed to break into a broad grin. Probably I was thinking of a French reviewer who, in tackling a recent work of mine, certainly provided me with a sudden sense of superiority !

* * *

The recent Kilmarnock hoax differed from most, as it really was intended, I suppose, to teach, and certainly does teach, a needful moral lesson. Kilmarnock is an old wild Whig town in Ayrshire.

The crows of Kilmarnock had spits and had spears,
And long-hafted gullies to kill cavaliers,

says the poet. Moreover, Kilmarnock is, somehow, connected with Robert Burns, perhaps because his poems happened to be printed there. Therefore there was joy in the town council when 'the Provost, douce man,' read a letter purporting to convey the desire of Mr. Andrew Carnegie to build a Burnsocarnegeium, or temple, for the joint cult of Burns and Carnegie at Kilmarnock. As far as I remember the letter, the temple was to be in the style of the Parthenon, with friezes representing the loves of Burns, while statues, in the interior, displayed his characters, such as Shanter, the 'wee modest crimson-tippit beastie,' the Mouse, rendered immortal by the bard; Holy Willie, Poosie Nan, Highland Mary, Lord Glencairn, and all the pell-mell of Burnsian characters. Whether the figures were to be in that popular material, wax, or rather in bronze, my memory does not inform me, but all was to be a memorial to 'the Nation's Pride.'

* * *

It was a glorious conception, and would have provided a great deal of employment for the Scottish school of sculpture, and brought money into the town, for who would not have made a pilgrimage to the Burnsocarnegium? Dumfries, proud as she justly is of the Mausoleum, would have taken a lower seat, and even Stratford-on-Avon would have seen her Birthplace and free library pale their ineffectual fires.

* * *

But the whole idea, to the sober mind, seemed only compatible with the hypothesis that Mr. Carnegie is rather an ass—an unsound hypothesis. Indeed, the joy of Kilmarnock was damped when this offer of a temple to the Nation's Pride was officially disclaimed. Mr. Carnegie has never dreamed of hanging on to the plaid of the Ayrshire ploughman by erecting this stately fane. The thing was a hoax. Somebody's sense of propriety had been weaker than his sense of humour. Extraordinary to relate, the humorist was no less a person than a Bailie of the good town. 'Observing the absurdity of men' and Scots, the Bailie had allowed a smile to cross his lips. That smile was the Burnsocarnegium. He had seen that Scotland expects Mr. Carnegie to do his duty, which is to erect free libraries through the length and breadth of a Presbyterian land, and under every green tree. But for Kilmarnock he would, naturally, do more; and, intoxicated by love of the Nation's Pride, he would 'a stately pleasure dome decree,' like Kubla Khan, in Xanadu. To Scots, this scheme could not seem incredible, so demoralised are they by Transatlantic dollars. Scotia, puir lass, has long lain, like Danæ, in a brazen tower, into which Mr. Carnegie, like Zeus of old, has descended in a shower of gold. Free libraries are 'the consekens of that manœuvre.' The Bailie calculated correctly on the credulity of his demoralised countrymen, and the hoax was a perfect success. But the humorous moralist had actually employed a policeman to type-write the letter containing the spurious offer. Why a policeman? Was that a subtle part of the joke? It did not need Mr. Sherlock Holmes to find out the joker, and the Bailie's place in Council knows him no more. He sits in sackcloth, with ashes on his pow, but probably he has the sympathy of Robert Burns, who, if mortal things touch immortal minds, must be greatly diverted. The affair is what the newspapers call 'an object-lesson.' Do not swagger too much about the Nation's Pride, who has dozens of monuments and the Mausoleum. There is an economical statue at Glasgow, on the top of a

very tall pillar, which, as far as appearances go, may represent either Burns or Sir Walter; it cannot be Knox, Wallace, Bruce, or Montrose. Meanwhile 'what porridge has John' Knox? No monument that I know, except the lean initials on his gravestone, almost under the feet of the prancing charger of Charles II., outside the Parliament House. If I am right, this is not fair, is not seemly. A friend of mine lately received a circular asking him, an Englishman and an Anglican, to subscribe to a monument of John Knox. He replied that he daily saw several monuments to Mr. Knox, in the shape of the ruined cathedral and Dominican chapel of St. Andrews, and that many towns boasted similar memorials of the great Reformer. Though usually much persecuted by promoters of memorials, I have not, somehow, been asked to subscribe to Knox's monument. Our fathers did not stone that prophet, and the children have not built his tomb.

* * *

The origin of the horse, that noble animal, is the theme of a very interesting paper by Mr. Cosser Ewart, the professor of natural history in the Town's College of Edinburgh. It was till lately thought that the genuine wild horse, with no domesticated ancestors, did not exist in a state of nature. Seeming wild horses were only strays from stable, bit, and bridle. But in Central Asia the famed traveller, Prijewalsky, discovered what he believed to be genuine wild horses.

* * *

When any interesting discovery is made, the tendency of science is to say that it is a hoax (if in archaeology), or an error, if in things natural, and, even among these, the gorilla was regarded as on a par with Mr. Barnum's stuffed mermaid. The wild horse was received with scepticism. Either he had tame ancestors or he was a hybrid between a kiang (*Equus hemionus*) and a Mongolian pony. If a hybrid, I presume that he was sterile, a fact which could be ascertained. The late Sir William Flower suspected that the wild horse was only a hybrid. In 1902 the Duke of Bedford had a lot of wild horse colts imported from Mongolia. Mr. Ewart finds that the skeleton and soft parts of the animal are not such as become a hybrid. He next, to put the matter to the touch, bred three hybrids between kiangs and ponies. If these turned out to be the so-called wild horses, then the sceptics were right, and the wild horse could no longer be 'proud of the title'; he would be only a

hybrid, not a wild horse. Mr. Ewart says: 'Sir William Flower, the late President of the London Zoological Society, having more than hinted, in 1891, that Prjevalsky's horse was a mule, one would have thought an effort would have been made forthwith to test this view in the Society's gardens.' But, when science holds a sceptical opinion, science is not always in a hurry to put that opinion to the test of experiment. A received view is so comfortable, why derange it ?

* * *

Mr. Ewart found that the mixture of strains which was supposed to have yielded the suspected wild horse did not yield anything like him. He is a clumsy, coarse-limbed, big-jointed beast, like the big-headed steeds that palæolithic artists in France used to draw on reindeer horn, when reindeer were common in France, nobody knows how many thousands of years ago. But the hybrids, which, by the sceptical theory, ought to have been coarse, thick-jointed, heavy-headed brutes, are built for speed, are full of energy and vivacity. One foal walked over twenty miles on the fourth day of its terrene existence. 'The joints are small, the legs are long and slender and covered with close-lying hair. In the wild horse the joints are large, and the "bone" is round, as in heavy horses.' The hair of the wild horse is quite unlike that of the hybrid: the 'chestnuts,' also, are different; so is the hoof, so is everything. The wild horse neighs, the hybrid foal barks, not unlike 'the rasping call of the kiang.' *Ergo*, the wild horse is not the hybrid which he is accused of being. Neither is he, as Mr. Ewart proved by experiment, the offspring of tame ponies run wild. Mr. Ewart thinks that our own horses have a multiplex origin, and that our big-headed, big-jointed horses are more nearly related to the genuine wild horse than our small-headed, slender-limbed varieties. I suppose that the wild horse descends from the palæolithic artist's models, to which Mr. Jorrocks might well have exclaimed, 'Come hup, you ugly brute.'

* * *

Some students see bridles and bits on some of the horses' heads drawn by palæolithic man, and seemingly, in one case, a covering has been thrown over one of these animals. Dr. Munro has suggested that the cover on this horse (if a cover it be) 'may be no more than the hunter's skin coat thrown over the back of the animal when

¹ *Proceedings Royal Society of Edinburgh*, vol. xxiv. part v. pp. 463-468, 1903.

led home by means of a halter made of thongs or withes, to be there slaughtered.' The brute must have kicked rarely, and why should a man throw his coat over a wild horse? If man got so far as leading a wild horse by a halter, he would pretty soon get on his back. However, the question is open. We have no palæolithic sketches, so far, of a man on horseback, and, if one was found, it would be called a forgery. It is to be hoped that Mr. Ewart will examine the original drawings made by palæolithic man, for one cannot find any certain opinion as to the presence of bridles on the horses from study of reproductions of the drawings. Casts would be more trustworthy than copies drawn by hand, or even photographs. Why, having domesticated the horse, the Homeric Greeks rode him so little, and drove him so much, is ever to me a great mystery. They could ride, and had travelling circuses displaying feats of fancy horsemanship, but they preferred chariots. And how, in Agricola's wars, the Caledonians could charge in chariots, over the bogs and hummocks, is another insoluble problem. Fancy driving a hansom across a moor!

* * *

It often strikes one that gentlemen of science would profit much by studying the works of novelists who excel in the construction of plots. For scientific gentlemen, in making a theory, are really constructing a plot. They take a collection of facts difficult to explain, and invent a story into which the facts ought to fit neatly, like the incidents in a tale. Mr. James Payn once wrote a novel in which the interest and the whole development hinged on the colour of the heroine's hair. But, somehow, in the middle of his romance, Mr. Payn nodded (as Homer is untruly said to do), and, forgetting what colour his heroine's hair had been at first, made it black, not golden, or golden, not black. I found him out, much to his amusement.

* * *

Dr. Durkheim, Professor of Sociology at the University of Bordeaux, and editor of *L'Année Sociologique*, an excellent annual, has fallen into Mr. Payn's error. For five years Dr. Durkheim has maintained a theory of the Origin of Society, or, at all events, of savage society. To understand it we must remember that a tribe, in America and Australia, usually consists of two divisions, called 'phratries' by science, each phratry bearing, in the oldest types, the names of two animals, say Wolf and Raven in America.

Every child born into the tribe belongs to his mother's phratry, is Wolf or Raven. If Wolf, he must never marry a Wolf girl, he must marry a Raven girl, and, if Raven, he must marry a Wolf girl. Moreover, in the Wolf division are other divisions, or kinships, called Salmon, Snipe, Trout, and Beaver; while in the Raven division are kinships called Grouse, Rabbit, Mole, and Dog. These are named 'totem kinships' or 'clans.' Every child belongs to his mother's clan as well as phratry; he is Wolf-Snipe or Raven-Mole, and he may not, of course, marry a Snipe if he is Snipe, or a Mole if he is Mole.

* * *

Such are the facts; how are they to be accounted for? Dr. Durkheim invents his plot. In the beginning there were two clans, say Wolf and Raven; no Wolf might marry a Wolf, no Raven might marry a Raven. The clans grew too large, and threw off swarms; each swarm then took a new name, say Snipe, Mole, Salmon, Grouse, &c. But they retained a sense of their old union with Wolf or Raven, and no colony thrown off by Wolf would marry a Wolf, or a member of any Wolf colony, while the Raven might not marry a Raven, or a member of any Raven colony. A Wolf, or a man of a Wolf colony, must marry a Raven, or a member of a Raven colony. So Wolf and Raven are now the 'phratries,' and Snipe, Mole, Grouse, Salmon, &c., are now the totem clans in the phratries. So Dr. Durkheim wrote in 1898.¹

* * *

This reads very well; but, alas! Dr. Durkheim did not 'jine his flats'—like Mr. James Payn, he forgot the colour of his heroine's hair! For in vol. i., page 52, he assures us, without noticing it, that all this could not possibly have occurred. For we want to know *why*, from the first, Wolf could not marry Wolf, nor Raven Raven? It is, Dr. Durkheim tells us, because Raven and Wolf were totems. And what is a totem? He is (vol. i., page 52) 'a being immanent in the clan; he is incarnate in every member of the clan. He is their blood. He is their ancestor and their god . . . a god who is entirely in the organism of each member of the clan.' He is in them, and they are in him. Again, 'a man can no more change his totem than he can change his soul.'² All that is quite true; a savage cannot change his totem. But, alas! in vol. i., page 6, Dr. Durkheim had assured us that, soon after the beginning of

¹ *L'Année Sociologique*, vol. i. p. 6.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 111, 1902.

things, plenty of men of the Wolf and Raven totems did do what he shows, in the same article, could not possibly be done : did change their totems, change their blood, change their gods, and change their souls. His entire system rests on the theory that men did what he truly declares that men could not do. You cannot change your soul or your blood, yet they did it, Dr. Durkheim tells us, in the most cavalier manner. For five years Dr. Durkheim has been maintaining a theory which, as he tells us, is impossible.

* * *

I suppose that, taking Europe, America, and Australia, about thirty-seven persons are interested in these problems. But, apparently, not one of the thirty-six (Dr. Durkheim himself being the thirty-seventh) has pointed out to the learned doctor that, in his plot, he has forgotten the colour of his heroine's hair, upon which his whole romance hinges and depends. Apparently the learned do not read each other's works very carefully, and I only discovered last night this extraordinary discrepancy in Dr. Durkheim's system.

* * *

He might get out of his scrape by saying that, at first, Wolf and Raven were only names, like Smith and Jones, and that they did not become gods, 'present entirely in every member of the clans called by their names,' till a later superstition raised them to that eminence, and made it wrong for Mr. Wolf to marry Miss Wolf. But he has declared (vol. v., page 110) that 'a totem is not merely a name, he is a religious element, first of all and most of all.' He is something of that sort among savages *now*, but he could not have been all that when Dr. Durkheim's savages changed their totems. If he were all that, then they could not have changed. *Then* he must have been only a name—easily changed, a name which became a god later, *nomina numina*, as Mr. Max Müller often used to remind us. So why had sets of savages that kind of group name, Wolf, Raven, &c., and how did the *nomina* become *numina*, how did the beasts' names become beast-gods—that is, totems? Dr. Durkheim has forgotten the excellent advice given to the Ram in the French fairy tale : 'Bélier, mon ami, commencez par le commencement!' He has not begun at the beginning. I hope this is intelligible to others than the sacred thirty-seven who are interested in these problems. If a man gives his undivided and

strenuous attention to the matter he cannot fail to understand these simple paragraphs.

* * *

Did you ever read the American poet Chivers ? Six months after Edgar Poe published *The Raven*, Dr. Chivers published *The Lost Pleiad*. Therein was a lament for Dr. Chivers's mother, dated '1849,' with the refrain, 'No, nevermore !' So Poe stole 'Nevermore' from Chivers. Worse, Chivers dates his poem *To Allegra Florence in Heaven*, December 12, 1842. So that is earlier than *The Raven*. Now, *Allegra Florence* has these lovely verses :

Holy angels now are bending to receive thy soul ascending

Up to heaven to joys unending, and to bliss which is divine ;
While thy pale, cold form is fading under Death's dark wings now shading

Thee with gloom which is pervading this poor broken heart of mine ! . . .

And as God doth lift thy spirit up to heaven, there to inherit Those rewards which it doth merit, such as none have reaped before ;

*Thy dear father will to-morrow lay thy body with deep sorrow
In the grave which is so narrow, there to rest for evermore !*

If Poe had not used this metre in *The Bridal Ballad* (1837), one might say that Poe had greatly improved on the metre of Chivers's *Allegra Florence*.

* * *

About 1851, Chivers came out with *Eonchs of Ruby*. An Eonch is a shell, like 'conch' in conchology. Here is a sample of an Eonch, based on Poe's *Annabel Lee* :

Where the Opaline Swan circled, singing,
With her eider-down Cygnets at noon,
In the tall Jasper Reeds that were springing
From the marge of the crystal Lagoon—
Rich canticles, clarion-like, golden,
Such as only true love can declare,
Like an Archangel's voice in times olden—
I went with my Lily Adair—
With my lamb-like Lily Adair—
With my saint-like Lily Adair—
With my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.

—Stanza 3.

Here is another :

Her eyes, lily-lidded, were azure,
 Cerulean, celestial, divine—
 Suffused with the soul-light of pleasure,
 Which drew all the soul out of mine.
 She had all the rich grace of the Graces,
 And all that they had not to spare ;
 For it took all their beautiful faces
 To make one for Lily Adair.

Go it, Chivers ! That is really very nice. It is also very like *Dolores*, by Mr. Swinburne, in movement, and Mr. Alphonso G. Newcombe, in *The Sewanee Review*, says that Mr. Swinburne's 'debt to Chivers is as conspicuous as his debt to Alfred de Musset,' which is so inconspicuous that I never noticed it.

Oh, festive and frantic Dolores !
 The joy of the Sixties wert thou,
 With thy sanguine and succulent glories,
 With the blood on thy breast and thy brow !
 But thy tune was afloat in the Fifties,
 So doth Mr. Newcombe declare,
 And to steal it poetical thrift is,
 From *Lily Adair* !

* * *

Chivers's poems are very rare. The British Museum has not a complete set of his works. 'There are less worthy poems' than one cited 'in every anthology of American verse that has declined to give him place,' says Mr. Newcombe. Will he not oblige true lovers of song (of whom I am one) by giving us a small and beautiful volume of *Selections from Chivers* ? The world, that neglects the lofty line, as Mr. Alfred Austin moans (and I do not mind saying that, as far as my own poems are concerned, Mr. Austin is right), the world would be awakened by the trumpet peal of Dr. Chivers.

* * *

The remarks on Canon Ainger which follow are from the pen of a friend.

* * *

The world feels poorer and duller to many now that Canon Ainger has gone from it. 'He is the only man I ever want to hear

lecture,' a well-known editor once remarked to me, and I heartily agreed with him. He might have added, 'he is the only man I ever want to hear read aloud,' for in his hands this usually rather boring experience became a moment of delight, and indeed of revelation. It is more than thirty years since, at our first meeting, he picked up a singularly meaningless magazine poem, and read it out four times, each time with a different emphasis, and finally laid it aside with regret, as containing no sense to extract! His friends were accustomed to have recourse to gentle wiles, to lure him on to give some passages from his favourite authors which were listened to with such pleasure by all. The conversation was turned carelessly in the direction of our wishes, the desired books were to be found, as if by accident, on the table near his chair, and somehow, however tired and dejected he might have been when he entered, in a few moments we were all convulsed with laughter over the humours of *Country Conversations* or Mr. Micawber.

* * *

A common sorrow is held to form the closest and dearest of bonds, but for twenty people who can share our griefs, there is scarcely one who can laugh with us. And do not our hearts go out to that one with a feeling of relief and certainty that the others never give us? Is it not true that the sympathy thus created is a tie that is binding both for good and evil days, and that sad indeed will be the hour when one's first thought on hearing a witty repartee or a clever story, will no more be to pass it on to the person who will most surely appreciate it? 'I must tell that to Canon Ainger,' I have said to myself, more times than I could count during the last ten years, and never once did my story miss its mark, or fail to provoke one even better.

* * *

Two other friends I had with this special grace of humour, both now passed away. One of them was an old and tried friend of Canon Ainger's himself, and together we three have spent many pleasant afternoons, which it will be a lasting pleasure to remember. For it is only those who have learned to suffer who know how to laugh.

* * *

I have often wondered at his great and even surprising patience with stupid people whom his quick mind must have chafed under,

but his courtesy towards them was unfailing. There was only one thing with which he could not put up, and that was any kind of pretension. It did not matter how plausible the pretension might be, or how carefully it was veiled, he saw through it instantly, and passed by on the other side. 'She was just repeating what she has heard other people say, and did not know she was talking nonsense,' he would remark, but the lady so criticised remained to the end of dinner in total ignorance of his adverse opinion.

* * *

As to the trouble he took for his friends, his care for them and his loyalty to them, this is not the place to speak. Like other people of fine taste and weak health, he had his moods, and perhaps lacked tolerance in certain directions. But he was in all things a man different from other men, and we shall never look upon his like again. He had the 'genius to be loved,' and there arose a 'great cry' from the hearts of many of us when we knew that the place in the world which suited him so perfectly, and which he filled so admirably, would know him no more.—L. B. L.

ANDREW LANG.

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